

*Her Mind's Eye:*  
**Women's Visions of Urban Life Explored in a Place-Based  
Social Mobile Photography Community Online and On the Ground**

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## Abstract

### ***Her Mind's Eye: Women's visions of urban life explored in a place-based social/mobile photography community, online and on the ground***

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This study employs community action research and arts-based research to explore collaborative development of the women's mobile photography community, *Her Mind's Eye*. *Her Mind's Eye* is an exploratory, creative and contemporary women's mobile photography community that exists both physically (through in-person meetings) and digitally (in online social media spaces). The group was designed to support women in learning and inquiring into mobile photography and new technologies within an encouraging, flexible, and supportive art creation community.

At the same time, it looks at the women's uses of the social/mobile photographic medium itself, finding that it was used for: personal memory keeping, communication, jumpstarting relational connectedness, experiencing an increased sense of awareness of one's environment, and of others' ways of seeing and being in cities. Through this community, we expanded the possibilities of collaborative and informal education, meeting in-person and on the social media platforms Facebook and Instagram. We found that these social media applications can be utilized to create "real life" connections between diverse individuals with like interests, in order to form city-based, digital/physical composite networks of people interested in creative photographic development. Simultaneously, we investigate how experiences of physical places (the cities of Montreal and Vancouver) can be shared in the digital world.

In addition to developing new networks and opportunities for creative growth, the group has a goal of exhibiting and promoting each woman's artwork, and exploring women's views and experiences of living in urban environments. *Her Mind's Eye* held one exhibition during the time of this study, and several more afterwards. Lastly, it was found that the presence of group traits and structural supports similar to those within feminist pedagogy, such as an ethics of care, and sense of community, were fundamental to the successful operation of *Her Mind's Eye*. Finally, having emerged from research origins, *Her Mind's Eye* developed the unique form of a micro-SMP community, containing several clearly delineated boundaries, those of: group size, committed participation, and a defined focus. This made for a very successful community of inquiry and creativity, which however, poses questions for long-term group sustainability.

## Acknowledgements

To begin, I would like to acknowledge and thank wholeheartedly **the women of *Her Mind's Eye***, who stepped forward with enthusiasm and open minds, to join me in this unknown process of creating regional social/mobile photography communities for urban women. You have inspired me and expanded my world – I am thankful to call you friends, colleagues and collaborators!

I would like to thank **Dr. Linda Szabad-Smyth**, my advisor who willingly joined me on this wild ride in this strange land of mobile-photography and urban informal art education! When I first approached her, she remained open to this unknown world. Surely uniting women, community creativity, and city, resonates with a vision that transcends media. In navigating the intricacies of bringing together a group of women from different neighbourhoods and backgrounds, in a group that lacked precedents, Linda was always happy to guide me in finding ideal pathways towards building a community of care. Her sense of care for the women of Montreal and beyond continues to make a significant impact on those connected to her (me!), and as such, further resonates throughout *Her Mind's Eye* and beyond.

Thank you to my committee members, **Dr. Claudia Mitchell** and **Dr. Lorrie Blair**. Together with Linda, I refer to you three as my “power team!” I am very lucky to have found such a wonderful trio to work with. I imagine not many doctoral students would say this to their committees, but *you really “get” me*, and for that I am so grateful! How could I have elegantly stumbled my way through this project otherwise? May we enjoy much future collaboration!

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## Dedication

To my mother and father,  
who always believed in my soul,  
& encouraged my inquisitive spirit and creative questing,  
Wherever it took me.

To my Oma,  
who taught me  
how to walk, and to listen  
to look, and to see,  
to value nature and life,  
to love, to be inclusive,  
To build a community,  
To live a life of kindness and care,  
to always keep hope alive,  
to throw caution to the wind,  
and to follow my heart.

To the women of *Her Mind's Eye*;  
thank you for awakening me to  
the joy of being in creative community.  
May you go far, and reach high...

To the women of Canada;  
Speak. Be bold and brave. Speak with heart, step forward, and be heard.  
Our wisdom and creativity is needed now, more than ever.  
It is never too late for us to make our dreams and visions  
for our country, and this world, come true.  
Find like minds, and actively do something.  
Let's help our communities  
to become something  
worth living for.

To the women of the world.  
We are half of the human race.  
What can't we do?

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## PART I: INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW

### CHAPTER 1. Introduction

As they live their lives people seem to be simultaneously gaining first-hand experience, and then reviewing digitized representations framed within screens. Narrative and meta-narrative seem to run on parallel lines; like auto-ethnographers, people are documenting and re-considering their lives (Davies, 2007, p. 550)

#### *Starting with a Story*

I have been in Montreal for about six years now – away from family, childhood friends, familiar landscapes, and the community and cities that surrounded me as I grew up on the West Coast of Canada. I intentionally uprooted myself in search of a new perspective and new prospects. I took a pay cut and left a guaranteed job teaching high school photography by the seaside for a brief stint into the unknown. “Two years,” I told everyone. “The program is only two years, then I’ll be back.”

The first two years were marked by the bliss of newness. During my visits to the West Coast, friends would ask anxiously about the long, cold winters. I felt no cold. The sweet Quebecois accent, relaxed cafés and the kindness I experienced as a visiting Vancouverite that had only been here “4 months,” “6 months,” and then “almost one year...” satisfied my yearning for something new. I spoke the city’s praises; I was certain it was the most wonderful city in the world.

It was at about the three-year mark when my hometown connections began referring to me as being “in Quebec” in a permanent sort of way. In Montreal, the often-asked question “how long have you been here?” resulted in my tensed shoulders and, in one case, a painful discussion with an angry dental hygienist.

I had re-rooted in a place that was not my own. Like my grandparents, who moved from Holland to British Columbia decades before, I had packed my things and gone far away. Unlike them, I had gone alone. I worked hard to establish meaningful relationships, then discovered what was meant by terms like ‘transient’ and ‘student city’ as I saw people in my life come and

go. Time and again, my network of people whom I trusted, and shared my heart with, would go, while I remained.

Perhaps it was language or location, sometimes circumstantial, but on more than one occasion I found myself without accessible family, reliable friends, or stable housing. Other, even less pleasant experiences left me feeling vulnerable. In the city's blaring summer, I began to feel cold. In this coldest time, seized by a need to share my life with someone and express my heart with those around me, I did what I always did. I turned to photography. Through the camera lens, over and over, I learned to adapt myself to this new place. I searched for beauty in the details of the city. I searched for signs of life. I went on long walks where, through the photos, I could find myself and lose myself, ask the difficult questions, and create my story.

As I have done since the beginning of my art practice, I turned online for a space to quickly share my work. It started with deviantart.com (a website where mostly young people post their artwork for comment), and then endured shaky moves into Flickr and Facebook. (Despite concerns about embarrassment, I have left many of these pages online as a sort of historical reference for myself.) The last five years have seen me transition from defending the expertise of the educated, highly equipped photographer, to becoming more interested in the artistic development process experienced by amateurs. Now amateurs and artists alike use mobile photography applications as their editing tools, and social media platforms as their collaborative classrooms, sources of mentorship, and inspiration. I also developed a specific interest in how these networks and affiliations were being used by women like me to connect with and investigate themselves and their cities, and to make their voices heard online through their photos and comments.

This experience of migration, self-initiated displacement and urban adjustment is not one unique to me. The stories may be different, or very similar to mine as is the case of Suominen (2003), whose PhD thesis is entitled "*Writing with photographs, re-constructing self: An arts-based autoethnographic inquiry.*" The experience is true both locally and globally; people are in motion, propelled by a global economy, and shrinking resources, in a time of unprecedented mobility and connectivity never before known by the human race. All this is changing the definition of "local," and for women who are especially impacted by these changes, it requires many of us to imagine ourselves in relation to our communities, cities, and virtual and physical worlds.

My Master's thesis was about creating a space for intergenerational storytelling and multicultural understanding amongst first, second and third generation immigrant youth living in Montreal. From this research I discovered the need for individuals (in this case, youth) living in complex urban environments to share their personal experiences in a manner that extended beyond cultural definitions and family histories. The very act of engaging with photography in an aesthetic exploration of their surroundings provided participants with a space for personal reflection and an exchange of urban life experiences, enabling communication that transcended cultural boundaries (Hart, 2007).

In my Master's research, I incorporated a combined action research and arts-based methodology and discovered how slow meditation and physical reorganization of student/participant photographs, occurring concurrently to my own art practice, led to new understandings for both my teaching and research. I experienced numerous breakthroughs in my teaching style, my curriculum design, my artistic process, and gained insight into the lives and experiences of my students (Hart, 2009). Photography was a powerful inquiry method and resulting data set, in which complex layered meanings were "visually written." Though it may be cliché, there is truth in the saying "a picture is worth a thousand words." Taking photos engages emotions and facilitates play with memory and symbols. In my experience, an on-going meditative viewing of images—what Hunter, Lusardi, Zucker, Jacelon and Chandler (2002) call the "incubation phase" or "intellectual chaos," brings forth saliences in research (p. 389).

In the setting of community education research, incorporating photography had the effect of enabling participants to share the stories of their personal experiences and observations with other participants and the community at large. It is from these observations that I have adapted my approach to teaching and conducting arts-based research within an urban community context, most notably, by strengthening the collaborative and community sharing aspects of my teaching and research philosophy. In so doing, I take a further step back, or step "down" from the powerful position of teacher, into more of a support role as a mentor and community facilitator, crediting the participants and group members as community co-creators, and artists in their own right. Additionally, throughout my Master's action research cycle I had a growing recognition of how my teaching and facilitation was greatly guided by my art practice and by communication with other community art educators and leaders. Moreover, I found that the further I proceed into "new" territory (in other words, extend beyond the realm of traditional classroom art

education), the more I rely on advanced practitioner knowledge, my personal artistic inquiry process (which draws upon issues present within my surroundings), and collaborative knowledge creation with student/participants, in the co-development of programming, or in designing curriculum. Building on these discoveries, this project's goal was to develop an effective social media photography community. Therefore I have included in my research design consultation in the form of informal interviews with community leaders in cities within my scope of access, I have grounded this study in a combined arts-based research and action research methodological framework. The interviews conducted with community leaders served to strengthen my understanding of the philosophies and organizational methods in use, and thus provided new tools for my curriculum development, which in turn, I hope, will prove useful to art educators and community organizers.

***Background to my questions. From macro to micro: Situating this research in the "big picture"***

I came to the topic of mobile photography communities and women's experiences of the urban environment through a special awareness of the struggles faced by women living in urban environments that emerged initially from my own experiences and from those of the women around me. As I searched for literature and knowledge to broaden my understanding of these complex challenges faced by woman in Canada particularly, I was introduced to several women's groups, notably Women Transforming Cities ([womentransformingcities.org](http://womentransformingcities.org)), which sought to identify and provide policy recommendations for addressing complex, interrelated issues that go beyond statistics, and which support local women's initiatives. Most importantly, I found there a focus on the development of professional and personal networks among like-minded women.

Many women in Canada today continue to experience discrimination and social problems that take a variety of forms, with these issues often being interconnected (Canadian Women's Foundation, n.d.). According to a presentation created by the Status of Women Canada (2015a), many women struggle with poverty and economic uncertainty related to job insecurity, continued inequality in the workplace, a lack of representation in specific (often high-paying) career sectors, and are more likely to experience violence. Women who are further marginalized due to additional conditions—such as the unemployed, underrepresented and immigrants—often experience these challenges most acutely (Status of Women Canada). A look at the quality of

women's influences locally, within Canada, and globally, reveals extremely low levels of representation, and lower status positions within politics, media, and the arts. To address these concerns the Canadian Women's Foundation (n.d.) proposes the following approach: "Focus on women and girls," "Address the greatest needs," "Listen," "Take a positive approach," "Work holistically," "Share power," and "Build a community," (para. 5-11).

In addition to these matters, social isolation is a leading concern for Canadian citizens, which has important implications for women (Vézina, 2001). This news comes in spite of Canadians' extremely frequent use of social media (Ipsos Reid, 2011). It is worth keeping in mind that both social media usage and its widespread scope are a relatively new phenomena, as is exemplified by Canadians' ownership of smartphones more than doubling between spring 2010 and spring 2011 (Ipsos Reid, 2011). As of 2014, a study of over 1000 individuals identified smartphone owners in nearly 55% of people across all generations (Sundaram, Wolfsberer, & Jenkins; 2014). eMarketer (2015) predicted that a staggering 80% of Canadian millennials (age 18 to 34) used smartphones in 2014. Despite the negative correlation between high levels of social media usage and smartphone ownership and low levels of social inclusion, in Canada, the failure (or success) of social media applications to address social isolation is only now beginning to be explored fully.

Phipps (2000) argues that "new information technologies (can be) a conduit for social inclusion" (p. 39). Although Tambulasi (2009) focuses on developing countries, his thesis that information communication technologies work to further social marginalization and exclusion due to deepening pre-existing societal trends, may apply to the Canadian setting and the perpetuation of gender inequalities. I argue that for these reasons, critical applications of social media tools by individuals and organizations well versed in overcoming social inequities must take place. According to Shigematsu (2013) social media can serve as a space in which marginalized voices silenced by traditional media avenues can be distributed and heard. There are many examples of how, when successfully mobilized, technologies such as social media can help to facilitate the organization of marginalized or disadvantaged groups. Powerful recent examples include the Arab Spring (Storck, 2011) and the 2012 student strike in Montreal, both of which utilized social media networks like Twitter and Facebook to arrange for mass demonstrations and the spreading of messages of social change outside of traditional media structures.

With these conditions and possibilities combined, it would be especially beneficial for women to hold leadership roles in technology and the media in Canada. In such roles, women will have greater influence and voice in Canadian society and thus in politics, are more likely to experience stable employment through the technology sector, and will have the capacity to mentor other women in these areas. Furthermore, art educators who work in social justice are well-positioned to intervene in areas of social inequity by designing community-engaged public informal art and media education networks through the use of new information technologies such as social media. Although statistics show that regular usage of the internet by men and women (equally) is extremely prevalent in Canadian society, (Dewing, 2012), women continue to be significantly underrepresented in the technology sector, and are considerably less likely to enter technology careers for reasons that include: experiencing isolation, feeling marginalized, lacking mentors, and balancing family life and motherhood with a career path that emphasizes risk taking (the demands of which are problematic, as children require some degree of stability and parental availability), (CATA Women in Technology Forum, 2010).

My own experience as a developing artist has included an ongoing, evolving participation in online artistic communities through which I have established networks and received feedback while supporting and mentoring other upcoming artists. As an academic and community organizer, I have reached beyond the limits of my own network and influence-based voice that boldly invited, introduced, and initiated new projects. Through Facebook, I have found like-minded, community-passionate leaders. One example of an active online photography community that I joined is *Instagramers Montreal*. Instagramers is a geographically situated group of individuals who are united in their common interest, Instagram. Instagram is a social media photography application that allows for instantaneous cropping, editing, coding (called tagging), commenting, and multi-platform distribution of images online. Through this community I met a variety of female artists and art creators on and offline, took up supportive, organizational and mentorship responsibilities, and engaged in a living interactive art practice that took place through the daily sharing and exchange of photography. The Montreal Instagramers community, like other online communities before it, has contributed to my development as an artist and photographer, and expanded my personal networks. In this community I have felt a sense of belonging that extended beyond being part of a social media photography community, to belonging as a citizen of Montreal.

In this study, I have employed Instagram and Facebook as tools or platforms used to explore the development of social media-based online and on the ground creative communities due to their prevalence, popularity, and my familiarity with these sites. I chose Instagram as it is a freely accessible visual sharing platform, that includes photo editing tools, and enables rapid sharing of visual content through the use of tags and following other group members. The layout of Instagram, then, places an emphasis on the visual production and sharing, while Facebook serves as a site for our casual chatting, organizing events, sharing links to resources, and other written communications which hold similarity to verbal communications. Although Instagram and Facebook are spoken of frequently in this study, the study is not intended to examine these tools alone, but rather to explore the process of collaboration, visual communication, artistic exploration and community creation within social media applications. There are numerous other social media applications that are available, and always more being developed, that hold great potential, particularly as some have artist-friendly policies around issues such as content ownership, advertising, and more, that make them very viable alternatives to be considered.

My experience connects with the work of Bloustein (2012), who explains that digital communities have been identified as spaces where women can traverse barriers to entry into male-dominated technologically based industries. Her research involved investigating girls who wanted to become DJs, but struggled due to the technologically focused machismo of DJ culture. She found that most girl DJs had discovered safe, encouraging spaces for mentorship and practice through online community groups and forums. In these spaces, the girls said they felt defined based on the quality of the content they created, rather than on their gender or appearance. From this community of young women DJs arose the creation of a DJing school to help support and train female DJs. This story and others highlight the possibilities of online informal learning to exist as public spaces for education that transcend societal limitations.

I have long applied my skillsets in the arts, teaching, and creative arenas to cultural organizations, such as the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, the McCord Museum and the Surrey Art Gallery; and educational institutions, including the Surrey School Board, Universities, Professional Art Education organizations, and community education programs. (A detailed description of my background as a teacher, community member and artist is discussed further in the beginning of Chapter 5, under, "The significance of background and context," as these features are presented as essential components which provided the preceding conditions,

skills and prior experiences that I drew upon in making the *Her Mind's Eye* SMPC.) With the opportunity that my PhD and thesis provided, I sought to build something for, and give something to, the very community that supported me—the generous, welcoming women artists and creators who inspire and challenge me as they navigate urban life, and strive to carve out their own unique spaces for expression. I hope also to recognize those whose passion has transformed into volunteerism and a praxis of social media creative community leadership.

### ***The Questions***

The main goal of this research is to investigate a central question, that asks how social media photography can be activated for critical community-based learning, to create networks (social capital) amongst women in cities and to serve as a space for women to explore visually their experiences of living within today's urban environments. In order to suitably address this main question, additional questions I ask are: What possibilities might social media hold for the formation of networks amongst women in urban centers? How might they serve as a space for supporting and acknowledging issues faced by women in urban settings? How might they enable the creation of personal and professional networks of women in urban communities that traverse physical and cultural boundaries? A broader question asks, how could the sharing around issues of daily life experiences through visual/digital means contribute to an overall sense of well-being in the city, and facilitate women's abilities to address issues of critical importance to themselves, and society? Furthermore, if technologies such as social media are becoming a means by which Canadian urban cities are creating new virtual and physical community networks (Veenhof, Wellman, Quell & Hogan, 2008), what possibilities might this hold for the role of community art educators? Last, in order to design an effective and lively community, I ask, how can one develop and maintain a successful and lively creative mobile photography community?

### ***Overview of the study***

The purpose of my research is to study the process of developing a non-traditional learning community a) existing both in person (physical spaces) and digitally (online), b) that supports women in learning new technology (specifically mobile photography and Instagram), c) seeks to create an encouraging and supportive digital photographic art creation community for women,

leading to d) women voicing their experiences of living in the urban environment through photography, and in an online/offline mobile photography-focused community of other women.

In order to address this main question and emerging questions, I approached this research in three parts: 1) through the creation of a Social Media Photography Community (SMPC) on Instagram and Facebook, 2) through my own artistic creation as a community member and community-engaged artist, and 3) by having met with mobile photography community leaders for mentorship/advising, and informal interviews about their beliefs and techniques for SMPC development. The central focus of this research is the creation of an informal, virtual and city-based (online and offline) mobile photography community for women, incorporating the methodology of Community Action Research according to Senge and Scharmer (2001), Mills (2003), and Brown and Reitsma-Street (2003), and arts-based research (Leavy, 2009, and McNiff, 2008). Furthermore, due to the emerging nature of the field and my recognition that my development of expertise as a social media community facilitator has occurred through practice-based inquiry, participation within the community, as well as through interviews with community leaders, it has been of special importance to me that I properly acknowledge and record the sources for my social media and informal art education curriculum development ideas, which was the reason for my having conducted preliminary informal interviews that had great influence on my practice. The mobile photography community I established and facilitated, called *Her Mind's Eye* has as its central goal women's exploration and representation of their lived experience in the Canadian urban centers of Montreal and Vancouver. This was done through the groups' on-going, arts-based social media photography practice, and development of multiple venues for communication around the topics that came up and the group's structure and goals, and for sharing their media/arts creations.

### ***Organization of the thesis***

This thesis is divided into five main parts, and is made up of 16 chapters. Part One includes this *Introduction* (ch.1) and a review of literature related to the question (*Literature Review*, ch.2). The literature review begins with a look at wellbeing in Canadian cities, the effects of Canadians' migration to urban centers, and the influences that these factors, coupled with inequity, have on women in Canadian cities. Next, I look at women in relation to the development of places/spaces, and further consider the influence of social media in the storying of space and place. This is

followed by a discussion of community arts, community development and local leaders, and ends with a summary.

Part Two, *Methodology and Research Design*, provides an overview of the methods employed in this study, and the design or structure of the study. *Methodology* (ch.3) begins with a discussion of the significance and examples of integrated forms of methodology to the field of art education, which is followed by an overview of the study that provides the reader with bearings in understanding the framework of the study. This is followed by introductions of each of the methodologies combined in this study – the practitioner-oriented methodology of community action research, the artistic process-oriented methodology of arts-based research, and inductive coding/emergent theme development following qualitative research traditions. This section ends with a look at the principles of good qualitative and arts-based research.

*Research Design* (ch.4) begins with an introduction that describes the integrated and overlapping nature between elements of the design of the research, with those of the practitioner-led and collaborative design of the community. This then connects to a description of my varying roles spanning from researcher to artist, friend, and more, discussing how these roles function as a backbone to the design of this study. Next, the process of data collection is reviewed, followed by a description of the different forms of data (from focus groups to online chats and photographs) and sources of data (from myself as researcher/community facilitator to community members). The last sections of research design cover the areas of ethics and identifiability in social media photography research, and close with a look at the analysis process.

*Analysis* (ch. 5) explains how the methodological origins and resulting data sets put forth in the research design are then realized within the interrelated analysis procedures, which flow from artistic practices, qualitative research traditions, and community/practitioner-led research. Multiple data sets and approaches to analysis led to different representations of findings designed by and for the audiences of this study, namely, art educators and community artists, academics and art education practitioners, and community members. Overall, this analysis procedure developed out of practice to fit with the goals and needs of the study. I constructed a “ladder of analysis” diagram to illustrate how these combined analysis techniques, and their completion within varying stages of the study by different actors led towards an expanded and emergent understanding of the dynamics of the community, the areas of focus for women in urban spaces, and the realizations of women’s needs that emerged in this community.

Part Three, the *Description* section, contains the central overview of the study. Within the *Description*, this study is presented in several different formats designed to match the questions at hand and speak to (and in the case of group members, to speak for) the different audiences it addresses. The *Description* section begins with *Prelude to Her Mind's Eye: Exploring the underpinnings* (ch.6) which presents how the community was constructed, including the origins of the project and my prior experiences that informed it. It includes the cross-influencing origins of existing Social Media Photography Community (SMPC) practices, informal and collaborative creative community development practices, and research standards. I present an explanation of why the background and context are extremely important aspects in the startup of *Her Mind's Eye*, and how prior experience and my combined roles as participant, researcher, artist and educator, as well as help from community-based mentors, served as the foundation for the startup of *Her Mind's Eye*.

*Making it* (ch. 7), includes a practical outline of the steps taken and stages that went into the construction of the social media photography community *Her Mind's Eye*, written with practitioners in mind who may be interested in exploring similar on/off-line SMPCs. It covers steps taken from the creation of the name, establishing online spaces/accounts for the group, safety, and other structural elements of the group such as in-person meetings and details about the types of activities and actions taken in online spaces.

Next is the *#SaturdayInHerMind* weekly themes section from the beginning, middle and end, (ch. 8), which utilizes the format of narrative inquiry together (Butler-Kisber, 2010a) with arts-based research to present the weekly photographic themes generated by the women in chronological order; this section is where the interactions of the group itself can be felt, seen and heard. The themes identified by participants are presented through the photographs developed by the participants, along with the women's own words and conversations, drawn from discussions that took place both on and off-line. These weekly *#saturdayinhermind* themes are further explored within sub-categories following qualitative analysis traditions. This identification of themes within group members' photographic and written responses enabled further interpretation and analysis around the women's selected topics and their responses.

Finally, the *Exhibition: HME exhibits in the city* (ch.11) section of the *Description* looks at the process of creating the exhibition, which came to be a major factor in the development and vision of the *Her Mind's Eye* community, and took place throughout the latter half of this study.

Here the collective process of planning an exhibition through social media, such as finding the exhibition space on foot, selecting works, developing artist statements, and negotiating and selling images are discussed. The last section in the *Description* is the *Her Mind's Eye's Exhibition Catalogue* (ch. 12) from our first March 2013 exhibition, shows participants' self-selected photographic collections or series, artist statements, personal introductory biographies, and visual documentation of our first exhibition. This exhibition catalogue format forefronts the findings of each woman through her own photographic inquiry process, which follows the traditions/standards of practice of the photographic arts: the creation of photographic series, artists' statements, and organizing an exhibition. It is a space for a multiplicity of voices and participants' self-selected content to rise up, therefore my voice, interpretation, and analysis is less in this section, as it is present within the following *Discussion* section, Part Four. Together, the chapters of the *Description* come to tell a story of our group in words and pictures. Finally, Part Four, *Discussions* and *Conclusion* consists of three chapters. It draws on experience, the ongoing organization, representations and analysis of data, and includes interpretation in order "to answer the question 'So what?'" (Mills, 2000, p. 99) and to make sense of the data (Creswell, 2007, p. 154).

Chapter 13, *Her social media photography*, looks at the photographs created by the participants, presenting themes and findings drawn from analysis. Next it describes the ways in which social media photography and SMP community was used by participants towards different means, such as: inquiry, relationality, and memory keeping. Next, Chapter 14, *The practices and features of Her Mind's Eye*, provides an overview of the structures that served as the basis for the development and management of *Her Mind's Eye*, Chapter 15, *Summary, Implications, and Recommendations* discusses the implications of this study, which include SMPCs as forms of art education, the significance of feminist pedagogical practices in the construction of a caring and relational community that served as the basis for our practice of collaborative inquiry, and women's community-based artistic/cultural supports. This section ends with concluding reflections on this study including areas of success and those in need of work, recommendations and areas in need of further research.

## CHAPTER 2. Literature Review

### *Introduction*

This section provides an overview of intersecting issues that hold great significance for arts and society in general, and therefore, pose important challenges and considerations for *Art Education*. Changes to Canadian cities are taking place at a rapid rate, and are marked by migration from rural centers (as well as international migration), which has in turn led to many individuals living lives that are rather disconnected from others within their communities. As such, there is a resulting need to rebuild networks of support as an overall necessity for further community development in cities. Special consideration should be made for how these issues and other changes in Canadian society impact women. While women are known to benefit from living in cities, they are most greatly impacted by the pitfalls of cities. As such, they have the greatest need for networks of support, particularly as women are known globally as being successful in addressing urban issues and positively impacting community development. In the past few years there has been huge interdisciplinary interest, and even the growth of a field that recognizes the capacity for creative placemaking and community arts programming to enable successful community development. Furthermore, new technologies are successfully being activated towards creative community development. This overview of literature, combined with my own experiences as a woman/artist/and social media photography community member points to potential benefits of applications of social media technologies for creative production and community or network formation amongst women in urban settings.

### *Wellbeing in Canadian cities: Migration, Canadians in transition, and the need for networks*

Statistics Canada (2011) has identified significant changes to the structure of families and living arrangements of Canadians. The percentage of individuals living alone has increased from 3.5% in 1961 to 13.5% in 2011, while 5.6 million Canadians are not part of a family, as defined by the Canadian census (Statistics Canada). Issues that face persons living alone include suffering greater social loneliness, and lower “quality of personal networks” than individuals living in a couple (Vezina, 2011, p. 67). To exacerbate the matter, “living in a census metropolitan area” was in itself a factor associated with low quality personal networks (Vezina, p. 67). Additionally, vast Canadian migration to urban centers has resulted in a population undergoing cultural change,

personal change and family/community change, as individuals learn how to restructure their lives in light of a new reality. Research conducted by Statistics Canada highlighted the importance of personal networks or “social capital” for quality of life of Canadians (Vézina). Social capital can be defined as “features of social life—social networks, associated norms and trustworthiness—that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (Putnam, 1995, p. 664-665). This information, combined with the struggles faced by women in Canada and in cities suggests the importance and need for single women and women in urban cities to have high quality personal networks. Hezul (2005) further identifies social capital as a prominent feature of community development, and “community art as a community-constructor” (p. 30), whereby assets can be shared and developed collectively for the community’s betterment. In addition to community arts as an avenue for community development, Veenhof et al. (2008) identify that virtual networks are being utilized by Canadians as a primary means of connecting with communities both online and physically. This Statistics Canada study identified such interpersonal networks and the technologies used to access them as key to social adaptation and developing a high quality of life; such tools are already being used by Canadians to gain knowledge and become connected with their communities (Veenhof et al.) Having strong social networks (or possessing *social capital*) results in greater social and economic wellbeing, while the opposite reduces a community’s capacity to deal with broad issues and demonstrate resiliency in times of distress (Carman, 2012).

***Women in (Canadian) cities: Social change and inequity in urban Canada.***

The federal government organization Status of Women Canada has established as its mandate the promotion of “equality for women and their full participation in the economic, social and democratic life of Canada” (2015b, <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/>). It prioritizes the need for focused efforts in the areas of “increasing women’s economic security and prosperity; encouraging women’s leadership and democratic participation; and ending violence against women” (Status of Women Canada). The *UN Status of Women in Cities Report 2012/2013* explains, “women are key drivers of economic growth and that wealth in the hands of women leads to much more equitable outcomes in terms of the quality of life of families and communities” (p. 7). They identify the “empowerment of urban women and youth [as] vital for future prosperity of cities.” This is because women, particularly those living in adverse

conditions including “the urban poor, are disadvantaged in terms of equal access to employment, housing, health and education, asset ownership, experiences of urban violence, and the ability to exercise their rights.” (UN News Center, 2013 para. 7).

I decided to focus my study on women in Canadian cities because of the inequity faced by women in society as a whole and within the fine arts. Women are more likely than men to experience economic challenges, career discrimination, and even violence or abuse, and are vastly under-represented in city planning and politics (Women Transforming Cities, n.d.). A 2015 presentation by Status of Women Canada (2015a), released under the Access to Information Act, confirms these matters, adding that in many areas, Canada, once a global leader in the rights and status of women has been rapidly losing ground.

While recent government changes bode well for immediate and future developments, in Canada the decrease of women’s advocacy groups has come about primarily in the past 10 or so years, despite the ongoing presence of inequality and sexism in Canadian society (Collier, 2014). Infrastructures designed to support Canadian women have been eroded, and numerous women’s lobbying groups have disappeared; the Public Service Alliance of Canada (2014) describes this as silencing women’s advocates. Collier (2014) describes the “demise of the national action committee on the status of women” as “not quite the death of organized feminism in Canada” which “does not bode well for the health of the national-level women’s movement” (p. 17). It should be noted that others, such as Walby (2011), retain a more optimistic view, and believe feminism to be alive and well. As explained by The Canadian Press and CBC News (2006): “The federal Conservative government says it will no longer fund women's groups that do advocacy, lobbying or general research. The drastic change to the mandate and operation of Status of Women Canada also drops the word ‘equality’ when listing the agency's goals” (para. 1). Only recently has the situation improved. Up until the national election in 2015, Canada appeared to be taking steps backwards, particularly with the introduction of new laws like Bill C-10, a direct threat to women’s pay equity, as the Public Service Alliance of Canada (2014) states: “The Public Sector Equity Compensation Act (PSECA) prohibits public sector workers from filing pay equity complaints with the Canadian Human Rights Commission ” (para. 15). However Canadians have since reacted, responding to the recognition of the need for women’s presence in leadership and decision making, as demonstrated by the actions of Prime Minister Trudeau in establishing a half female cabinet, alongside his statement of justification when asked why,

(which was rapidly disseminated through social media networks), “because it’s 2015.” This statement demonstrated recognition that Canada had fallen behind on women’s equality and indeed, that the time had come to regain lost ground.

Canadian women represent a diverse group, many of whom are disconnected from strong social supports in urban spaces, and have recently been falling behind socially and economically, in part, due to systemic and political actions. Now, more than ever, women need to be connected, aware, reflective, creative and sharing knowledge and assets. A UN HABITAT (2013) report identifies that “Women migrate from rural to urban areas mainly in search of employment, and, in order to escape from poverty, gender-based violence, gender discrimination and disinheritance” (p.VII). Although many of these issues reach beyond the scope of this study, a look at the present environment and these issues impacting Canadian women demonstrates the significance of strong women’s networks in Canada. The UN report addresses women’s wellbeing in cities:

There are two main standpoints that propagate the benefits of urbanisation. One is that cities are associated with opportunities for wealth generation. Concomitant to this is the idea that urban women supposedly enjoy greater social, economic, political opportunities and freedoms than their rural counterparts. However, the notable gender gaps in labor and employment, decent work, pay, tenure rights, access to and accumulation of assets, personal security and safety and representation in formal structures of urban governance, show that women are often the last to benefit from the prosperity of cities. (Gender and Prosperity of Cities, State of Women in Cities, website para. 1.)

This report also states that “More than one-third of city dwellers identified NGOs and civil society as the most important set of institutions involved in the implementation of gender equality policies” (p. ix). They propose that many would experience great benefits as a result of a strengthening of ties between the government, as well as “NGOs, civil society and grassroots women’s organizations who are working on the ground and building multi-stakeholder alliances and partnerships” (p. xi). Concerning women’s influence in society, the UN recommends that in order for women’s influence to be visible in politics, there must be a minimum critical mass of 30% women in government office (United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, 2005). Presently, in Canada, only 24% of elected officials are women (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2013). Although women have not made great gains in securing government positions worldwide, women’s leadership on the ground is increasing globally.

The UN HABITAT report (2013) proposes that since women are not moving into higher

political positions, perhaps power structures should be reorganized to grant more agency and resource management at the community level. Islam's (2005) paper entitled "Creating an Outer Circle in the Digital World: Participation of Women in the e-Government System" opens with a quote from the United Nations Secretary-General's 2003 Statement to the World Summit on the Information Society: "The so-called digital divide is actually several gaps in one... There is a gender divide, with women and girls enjoying less access to the information technology than men and boys. This can be true of rich and poor countries alike" (p. 1). Key features of information technology today are the access to knowledge and concurrently, the creation of media and digital content that comes to form knowledge by influencing the development of shared understanding and realizations of place and shared values. Similarly, at the Women Transforming Cities conference in Vancouver, Solomon (2013) spoke about the lack of adequate representation of women in the media, explaining that women need to tell more stories than just the big stories, as media shapes the way we think and can change or maintain social standards. Presently, as she comments, "media is derogatory to the most powerful women" (para. 28).

For these reasons, community engaged programming with a focus on women's expression and production in various media forms (from art to news media), and research that speaks to Canadian women's issues, holds special potential for improving women's wellbeing in Canadian cities. A sober look at these issues may confront many of us with unrecognized, internalized, and accepted everyday realities. This may be particularly true for those of us who are women living in cities, who have grown or remained familiar with inequities that we navigate everyday; but these inequities affect every woman from all class backgrounds, influencing our quality of life, our safety, and our future societies, and our prosperity. These issues are discussed amongst closed circles with friends and families; they are awkward problems that we can't seem to find a solution for in the course of the everyday. It is easy when reading a brief synopsis like this to think of these matters as being outside oneself, or reserved for especially marginalized women, but they are realized in different forms, impacting urban women in different ways, and together they constitute a social problem that impacts women in Canadian cities and across the globe. It is true that women have made great social gains, but as hooks (2014) has observed: "once we ceased being critically vigilant, the sexism began to be appear" (p. 23). We are now seeing this happening in Canada. As the UN HABITAT report (2013) states:

There is evidence to show that future cities will be predominantly occupied by women [...] and female headed households. Yet our cultures, value systems and beliefs, and to a large extent development policies and programs are not changing at the same pace as the demographic shifts. Gender discrimination is still rife in social, economic and political spheres. [...] Additionally,] urbanization is largely associated with the prosperity of women in theory, but in practice few women actually benefit from economic growth and prosperity in cities. (p. iv).

### ***Women and place/space, social media and story***

As I follow the labyrinthine diversity of personal geography, lived experience grounded in nature, culture and history, forming landscape and place, I have to dream a little, as well as listen for the political wake-up calls. (Lippard, 1998, p.5)

While urban spaces are largely known to have been developed within a patriarchal/capitalist model, with the needs of men predominantly in mind, what do places and spaces really mean for women? While the notion of hybrid-culture and places provided by Lippard (1998) gives hope for this dualistic view, questions still remain. In envisioning a “feminist analysis of architecture,” Boys (1984) proposed, it “should not be only interested in ‘women’s place’ in society, but in gender relations, and the importance and variety of individual experience” (p. 25). How are local physical spaces enacted in daily life, how do women choose to move through them? How are we controlled by them, where, and why? Do we feel happy, safe, comfortable and capable? For highly mobile and young migrant women in Canada, who are many (Walsh, 2012), particularly in student cities like Montreal, how does engagement with space and place influence who they are, what they (feel they) can do, their dreams, economic security, engagement with the city, and so on? Do women have or need greater access to space/place in cities, and how are digital spaces being utilized as accessible, lower-cost alternatives to physical ownership/realization of one's own space? Overall, what is the value, influence, and importance of the local on the lived realities of women?

Imbuing the local with the human meaning found in the depth of emotions, or “re-sentimentalizing place,” Lippard (1998) confesses, “I know I have been lured to the subject of the local by its absence or rather by the absence of value attached to specific place in contemporary cultural life, in the “art world,” and in postmodern paradoxes and paradigms” (p. 5). She points to the valuable contributions of art to studying and experiencing place,

incorporating the admonishments of geographer Pierce Lewis who endorses drawing (a process of prolonged visual engagement) as a means of seeing details that are often missed.

This practice of deep engagement with a moment found in the everyday can be seen in the work of Mary Pratt, a Canadian artist whose photo realistic paintings of her domestic rural life have broken through the barrier separating women, the local, domestic experience and high art, as is exemplified by her 50-year retrospective. While the Globe and Mail describes her as subversive (Pinchin, 2013), Pratt's description of her life and work sounds like that of both a realist and a visual sensualist (Whyte, 2014). In her description, one can feel the heart of a talented artist that captures and distills the exquisite enchantment of a moment: a ray of light captured on a piece of aluminum foil with the vivid drops of blood, inevitable outcomes of a fresh fish dinner. Beyond Pratt's role as a subversive feminist or female empowering painter (which I don't dispute), her work speaks clearly of one person's experience of life and complications, filled with various allusions to domestic, environmental, and relational struggles. That person just happens to be a woman who is talented at living, feeling, and capturing life through paint. All in all, her act of painting is a process by which she is fully present with her surroundings, creates meaning from this experience, meditates on it through painting, and shares the results with us. The resulting presentation is one remarkable women's passion found in the everyday artifacts of domestic life. How does our presentation of our experiences as women, and our sense of place and the local, create and define our collective identities and those of place, as well as our cultures, our values and communities? In our nation of growing diversity and shifting (or declining) spaces for women's gathering and expression, how can art be enacted in new ways and in new spaces? Do our visual voices and online activities come to form our local cultures, the materialization and living form of our communities?

Lucy Lippard (1998) explains that spaces become defined through an individual's interactions with them and their attribution of meaning to those spaces. When a space has meaning attributed to it and is interacted with, is the point at which it becomes a *place*. Lippard clarifies regarding the creation of places, "Space defines landscape, where space combined with memory defines place" (Lippard, p. 9). While notions of place evoke cartographic connotations, space, perhaps remains more free; a friend of possibility. Opening up notions of space, Lippard says, "I use space here as a physical, sometimes experimental, component. If space is where culture is lived, then place is their union" (p.1). One can also consider mental or head space, and

can envision flexible and amorphous online space that can be painstakingly constructed for years, and like thoughts, can just as quickly vanish, or become woven into networks and inescapable.

Instagram is primarily a smart-phone based application that enables users to upload and share photographs, create personal photo galleries, receive a stream of updated photos from others, and to make their photos searchable. As a user-generated visual content sharing network, Instagram serves as an alternative media and communication space that has the potential to transcend cultural and social structures that limit women's free expression and collective exploration of ideas, though restrictions and controls that can be seen in Instagram's policing of content for policy conformation. For example, Olszanowski (2014) found on Instagram, a space for women's communication and artistic experimentation around the self-representation of their bodies and nudity, with women generating techniques to subvert Instagram's censorship and positivity rules, (as she notes the policy guideline instructs users to *have fun!*).

Such techniques include the creation of multiple accounts, temporary posting of content, and curating their audience or followers, so as to restrict followers who may report their accounts. Women can use social media to create digital spaces that are fluid, connected and alternative/networked personal digital spaces. While a digital gallery may showcase much of an individual's media creation in a given space perceived as stable or fixed, an alternative, seen in the example above, is the establishment of a like-minded network where content display is temporary, but contacts know that they can intermittently view and engage with the creator's work at the specified digital address, perhaps even at a designated time. This is similar to the creation of digital meeting places—some degree of anonymous sharing can be possible. Separated from every day local spatial and social realities, these women are more able to explore conceptions of self and body in photography, without for example, calling into question their moral character or compromising their jobs. The risk of being found out, and the efforts required to circumvent Instagram's censorship are extensive and perhaps exhausting, posing implications for the viability of long-term practice (Olszanowski, 2014).

Recently Instagram has come under criticism for its double standard in censoring the female body, particularly women's nipples and photos that show menstrual blood. Instagram apologized after censoring the photo depicting menstrual blood, following an online revolution that started with a revolt by one Instagram artist's followers (Thacker, 2015). The Instagram user was Rupi Kaur, a Toronto-based poet and artist who presently has an impressive "231K"

following her account, which includes self portraits, poems and drawings; and speaks of resiliency and memory in recovering from abuse, relational struggles, sexism, misogyny in society, and the social control of women's bodies ([https://instagram.com/rupikaur\\_/](https://instagram.com/rupikaur_/)).

In another example, Aguayo and Calvert (2013) utilized Instagram's new role as an alternative space for women's self-expression in media, to curate a photo collection. They recognized the transformation taking place in photography and vernacular imagery, describing mobile photography as "a culture focused on documenting important occasions such as celebrations, travel, and rituals, but there is also an elevation of the mundane—the images of the private sphere seeping through" (p.181). They sought then to access these visual documents of life to create a curated photographic space in their article, with the purpose of countering consumer media representations of women. They create this alternative media space by curating a collection of photographs that represent the diverse realities of women, who have responded to their call. Similarly to the images which emerged from *Her Mind's Eye*, Aguayo and Calvert note the range of "how women have appropriated the lens, documenting the spaces of their lives," (p. 184) their images representing real moments, "from documenting the discomfort of being crushed between two men on a subway to a quiet moment of work for a PhD-seeking mother, the images recapture an undocumented womanhood" (p. 184). They define their intentions in this project as to understand "photography first as a dynamic social practice, historical document, and finally as an aesthetic medium" and their collection as the result of a public call for images that together "represent a world apathetic about the values of commercial culture that codify women as primarily sexual and forever young" (p. 183).

While media technologies are affecting public awareness and change by facilitating public online engagement, by applying the power of media together with that of personal story, such technologies are also playing a significant role in the storying of spaces and places. To understand the significance of how local voices and technologies are being used to restructure communities in favor of the inhabitants, one can look to the democratizing goals of such movements as citizens' media (Rodriguez, 2001); oral history and digital storytelling (Lambert, 2012) and others. Lippard (1998) sheds light on the subject: "Culture is usually understood to be what defines place and its meaning to people. But place equally defines culture" (p.11). In gathering and connecting ourselves and our lives to place, through mobile media and GPS technologies, there is the potential to change how we see and engage with places, as well as the

living culture and experience of place. Schwartz and Haleboua (2014) explain that in mobile interactions with place such as Geo tagging and media sharing, users perform identity through digitally mapping their movement through space. Similarly, this mapping and sharing of situated, storied, and aestheticized content has an influence on place, as it is shared, with users' paths, activities, and memories re-lived and built upon by other users. Even in the very definition and associations of individuals' movements, cultures, and the realities and activities associated with various places and spaces, the city is being digitally written and, like clay in potters' hands, local culture is being reformed. Great possibilities await us for co-creating our diverse Canadian cultures and cities.

### ***Community arts, community development and local leaders***

Community arts create a magnetic draw for local creative development, as art is engaged with local culture and the everyday lives of citizens (Hezul, 2005). As Grodach (2010) observes: "Art spaces function as a conduit for building social networks that contribute to both community revitalization and artistic development" (p. 74). Cultural initiatives and informal grassroots arts organizations benefit the community by contributing to community development, and providing creative sector improvements and innovation, while positively impacting community mental health, as local residents' impressions of their communities improve (Guetzkow, 2002). In describing the role of the arts in community transformation, Adams and Goldbard (2005) use the terminology community cultural development (CCD); several of the core tenets are:

Active participation in cultural life is an essential goal for community cultural development. [...] Culture is an effective crucible for social transformation, one that can be less polarizing and create deeper connections than other social-change areas. [...] Artists have roles as agents of transformation that are more socially valuable than mainstream art-world roles – and certainly equal in legitimacy (p. 16).

Goldbard (2006) describes CCD as "the work of artist-organizers and other community members collaborating to express identity, concerns and aspirations through the arts and communication media. It is a process that builds individual mastery and collective cultural capacity while contributing to positive social change" (p. 20). Speaking of the similar creative community approach of Creative Placemaking, Schupbach and Iyengar (2012) of Createquity posit that artful creative places can impact their community in four ways: by "strengthening the infrastructure

that supports artists and arts organizations; increasing community attachment; improving quality of life; and/or driving local economies” (para.15). Such creative places are characterized by informal art networks and the infrastructural elements that support the individuals and organizers within them.

Markusen and Gadwa (2012) identify two key characteristics of informal art networks: conversation and spontaneity. They identify the importance of skilled artist community leaders who often take up demanding positions that require continuous extensive communication with individuals in order to develop and maintain networks. These individuals demonstrate skills of flexibility and spontaneity that are required to adapt to individual and community circumstances while they also engage with new artistic, creative and community-based innovation often leading to economic gains for the community. Adams and Goldbard (2005) concur, in recognition of the skills needed for the development of creative communities and identify CCD as an area for growth which, I argue, have significant implications, and hold promise as an area requiring further research in art education:

In the Information Age, when livelihood depends increasingly on mastery of cultural tools and ability to provide useful service, supporting this field will also help to develop an essential new form of sustainable livelihood for community artists and organizers, one with impressive potential for growth as its efficacy is demonstrated to the many public and private agencies in a position to support community cultural development projects in their own sectors. (p. 112).

While Adams and Goldbard (2005) recognized that research to date focuses on “live, in-person forms of cultural participation and the support needs of existing practitioners” they also note, “cyberspace provides a whole new terrain for cultural development, one which community artists are uniquely equipped to cultivate, with the aim of bringing new technology’s democratic potential to fruition” (p. 6). What is needed is knowledge of how to develop digitally-based (or on/offline) cultural spaces, and the supports required to sustain the communities and the leaders.

Through my observations and preliminary studies, I came to recognize that characteristics and skillsets necessary to “on the ground” creative community leaders, to also needed by social media community leaders. Of special note, I recognized within social media photography communities a prevalence of unpaid women leaders who personally took upon themselves the responsibilities for developing and maintaining social media art and community groups, and, due to personal responsibilities, occasionally have had to step back from these voluntary positions.

Regarding the field of studies examining the impact of arts communities on neighbourhoods and cultural development, Guetzkow (2002) found that:

...researchers study formal groups and organizations to the exclusion of more informal groups, such as local neighborhood knitting groups and the like. Case studies tend to focus on arts programs developed for marginal populations (like at-risk children); it would be interesting to see what could be learned from comparing these programs to ones where most of the participants are middle or upper-middle class. Also, researchers often study community arts programs that have some kind of political or social goal: what might be learned by comparing these organizations to those that have no such goal? (p. 21)

Although I have mentioned that a personal and applied feminist theory was present within the design/foundation of the *Her Mind's Eye* community, I intentionally left the precise goals and mandate of the group open-ended. Again, as a result of a participatory-orientation and feminist vision, my reason for doing this was so that group members could freely engage in such a way as to meet their needs and visions, and collectively develop and achieve their own creative applications of social media arts technologies, and mobile, digital, networked communications.

By investigating informal community arts on and offline, I provide in this study examples of community praxis through the eyes of an artist, researcher, and educator/community facilitator, thus establishing some strategies for developing a creative social media community through arts-based and community action research. Ideally, these resulting data and findings will lead to developing policy and agencies for making online innovative arts programs more durable and sustainable. Put another way, I hope that documenting and formalizing some of these practices may help to create spaces for artistic growth, community development and recognition and assistance for women leaders. In this research, I acknowledge that I have built upon a foundation already laid by the many digital art community leaders before me.

***Intersections:*** *Technology-based informal education, community building and Art Education.*

Barone and Eisner (2011) recognized technology-based, arts-based research as being timely and requiring further investigation and exploration by researchers versed in the skills needed to engage with it. Through the creation of the women's social media photography group *Her Mind's Eye*, this research program investigates this synergetic relationship between technology and arts-based research by utilizing new possibilities for art creation, community art education and collaborative arts communities. It explores teaching/learning/collaborating/researching in

both real time and space, i.e. within physical locations such as university spaces, art galleries or community centers, and in virtual, technology-based spaces like Instagram and Facebook.

Using applications available on smartphones allows users to instantaneously connect to one another to distribute content, and increases the mobility and rapidity of the production of media content. As a mobile photographer and community member, I can take a photo while walking down the street, edit it at a café, and then publish across numerous social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Blogs, Twitter, etc.) Within a minute, half an hour, or day, all the people who follow my account on Instagram will see the image when they open the app within their continuously updating photo-feed; the same goes for other social media platforms, as well as those searching for specific tags, like #montreal.<sup>1</sup> I can also utilize Facebook's groups' feature to organize mobile photography community events, meetings, post updates or news around group themes, and to otherwise facilitate communication between members about these themes and events. The Instagramers communities are city-specific groups of loyal users who are especially interested in mobile photography, in meeting others and in developing their skills and abilities ([www.instagramers.com](http://www.instagramers.com)). They usually approach mobile photography as a skilled, socially-connected photographic form, located within the realm of arts or media. As such, they constitute what Heijnen (2012) might identify as an informal art community.

Informal art communities are nothing new. It could be argued that they have been around nearly as long as the first artists themselves. Since North America's entry into industrialization and urbanization, "art education could be found in formal and informal education" (Stankiewicz, Amburgy & Bolin, 2004). In a recent project evaluating informal art communities as sites of knowledge sharing, education researchers from around the globe examined the learning mechanisms that take place. They focused on how these communities grow, on their collective expertise, and how they develop best practices and standards for their field (Heijnen, 2012). Examples of such non-institutionalized art creation communities include graffiti artists, street artists, and fan artists (who create work in response to popular cultural media productions, like *Harry Potter*). According to Heijnen, research showed that although the primary goal of these non-institutionalized art communities was for individuals expressing like interests in subject matter and developing their craft, secondary results included the development of strong networks,

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed narrative of this process, please visit the *Discussion* section, page 79. A comprehensive description of the different social media applications is on page 75.

mentorship relationships and a sense of community and camaraderie which aided individuals who were socially marginalized or at-risk.

In Heijnen's (2012) example, the internet served a key role in enabling members' sharing of their productions, in communicating in online forums devoted to community practices, and in arranging meetings between members. Similar informal art groups have emerged around online arts technologies. Beyond the ability to plan events and post community updates, many online art applications have gained a devoted group of participants who define community norms and standards, utilize tools, and change technological applications by challenging developers through public outcries, by manipulating and transforming tools, and by expressing their expanding needs. In examining the effectiveness of the online photo community Flickr, Davies (2006) identifies an "interactive, social learning processes (...) which allows individuals to reconsider the way they see themselves and their social worlds" (p. 218). She argues that "Their interactions with others and the sharing of social discourses helps them to develop a new space, a 'Third Space', where new sets of social practices and codes of conduct evolve over time" (p. 218).

Markusen and Gadwa's (2010) analysis is that communication is a vital component in the functioning of community-based art organizations. Cities like Vancouver have the highest percentage of social media users in the country, and while citizens cite social isolation as their number one concern, this suggests that many users of new communications technologies have yet to experience effective communication through digitally-based social connections within their daily physical realities. I argue that social media and information technologies alone do not contribute to social betterment, but that similar to grassroots work that takes place on-the-ground in cities, these tools can be implemented toward goals of social cohesion, social inclusion, and empowerment. In other words, social media tools can be used in cities to create spaces where marginalized people can share their perspectives, their voices, and develop networks for distributing media related to the issues that affect them most.

Although social media contains within its design directions for best practice, it has been my experience that in order to create local networks with active, exciting communities of practice, it is necessary that the community have leaders or facilitators who devote large amounts of time to creating connections and reaching out to group participants. By analyzing and formalizing the role of a social media art community facilitator and the significance of such a role in the present-day performance and development of modern cities, networks and

communities (both virtual and physical), I hope to provide resources to individuals taking on such roles, and promote critical applications of informal learning technologies--particularly through community-university research partnerships. This may help to create more sustainable and meaningful social media photography communities. In a series of advocacy white papers for Art Education (put out by the National Art Education Association) Stokrocki, states: "In the future, the potential range of digital worlds for art teaching is endless..." (Stokrocki, 2012, para. 1). Stokrocki notes that presently a paradigm shift is occurring in art education in conjunction with the increased use of electronic communication tools; she asks "So how do we teach, learn, and assess results in these new digital worlds?" (p. 2). In a follow up white paper, Wilson (2011) then recognizes that "living in actual and digital visual worlds" should "be the primary goal for art education" (p. 6). Educators Lu (2010), Liao (2008) and Carpenter (2009) have all conducted research into best education practices related to virtual communities and digital worlds, with a focus on incorporating online communities like Second Life into their classrooms.

Stokrocki and Andrews (2011) utilized virtual worlds as spaces for teaching literacy and life skills to disenfranchised youth, recognizing what Castro (2012) describes as the potential in these decentralized learning spaces. Davies (2006) calls it "Third Space" following her analysis of Flickr through the roles of researcher, artist and community member. Such examples illustrate how digital technologies are creating spaces within which new modes of visual art learning are specially suited to developing new literacies. Stokrocki (2012) states, "This call for networks of people, tools, and technologies, as well as school programs to build better modes of learning through media literacy, matches well with future goals in place for contemporary art education theory and practice" (para. 3). Buckingham (2006) advocates for *critical digital literacy*, which constitutes an awareness of the authors and audience for digital media both in reading and creating content. Stokrocki (2012) identifies critical digital literacy as "a means for eliminating marginalized peoples, misinformation, commercial predators, and cyber-bullying" (p. 4). In this same publication, Wilson (2011) confirms the importance of teaching and creating digital art worlds to the field of Art Education: "Indeed, so far as art education is concerned, digital image worlds, especially those found on the World Wide Web, point to the future! Arguably they provide the best means for teaching students how to live in all other art and visual cultural worlds" (para. 8). Wilson's study of the online artist person of "HellNoKitty" analyzes her impact as an artist and inspiration for other collage artists through the social media network

Polyvore; he calls her “an active and skillful participant in a complex digital artworld” (p. 8). He concludes with the argument that “living in art and virtual worlds (should) be the primary goal for art education” (p. 6). These various examples show a commitment within current art education research to develop new theories and methodologies that incorporate the complex ways of knowing that occur within technologically mediated and networked virtual spaces. While connecting to themes present within many of the aforementioned categories, my research addresses a gap in the field, as it examines the possibilities for art educators to develop critical social media communities which might engage urban women adult learners through informal digital/mobile arts creation. Furthermore, it takes advantage of the potential (presented by virtual communities) to address the important matter of women’s wellbeing, voice and cultural contributions in Canadian cities.

### ***Summary or Conclusions***

Clearly the type of work that I describe in this chapter is a burgeoning field. During the time that I have been conducting this research, new publications have come forth, presenting numerous different applications and considerations of Instagram and other social media and digital social technologies within art education. Therefore, this thesis’ exploration of collaborative realizations of social media-based and on-the-ground community arts, and its study into the facilitation of such a practice can serve as an influential resource for art education. It highlights the process of collective online/offline inquiry by women towards a realization of voice within a community environment. In exploring community development, this thesis examines the practical requirements, philosophical groundings, and facilitation skills required by practitioners in on/offline spaces. From a knowledge and arts generation perspective, it explores intersections of art/media creation, and the sharing and collaborative exploration of content, particularly in relation to urban women’s needs. As such, it engages with women’s art and visual exploration in accessible and flexible spaces while working towards greater distribution of leadership to suit women’s needs. Through this exploration of the creation of the group *Her Mind’s Eye*, and the practice that was established in these yet emerging sites, it serves to add additional instrumental knowledge to the field of art education.

## PART II: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

### CHAPTER 3. Methodology:

#### Arts-based, Qualitative, and Community Action Research

##### *Mapping the study*

In chapter one, I presented the overarching research question: How can social media photography be activated for critical community-based learning, to create networks (social capital) amongst women in cities, and to serve as a space for women to explore and examine their experiences of living within today's urban environments? This has been addressed through two main actions. First, the creation of an online and off-line social media photography community (SMPC) for women in two cities, called *Her Mind's Eye*. This creation was informed by collaborative planning and development with community members/participants, in addition to my prior practices as a community member of existing SMPCs, and personal inquiries into these communities practices. Second, women's explorations of urban life have occurred both within community and through photographic creation within this SMPC. We also investigated the capacity of SMPCs as emancipatory and artistic creation spaces. The first action of creating the group contains a practitioner focus and was conducted through a community action research process of spiraling inquiry, as well as informal interviews, which were designed to inform my work as a practitioner and community facilitator. The second takes place using combined arts-based research methods as well as emergent themes developed by the community, and discussion of the emergent and community-defined categories that followed.

This methodology chapter opens with a description of the values and suitability of combined/integrated methodologies for research, and in Art Education, which frequently has several audiences in mind, those of the academy, the community and practitioners. Next, I present the types of combined methods used in this study, which is followed by a detailed overview of each of the methods of action research/community action research, arts-based research, and principles of good qualitative research and arts-based research and their representation within this study. The inductive coding of photographs is discussed in greater detail in chapter 13, in connection to the process of Margolis and Rowe, (2011), described by Holm, (2014), as being based in content analysis.

*Art education's suitability to integrated/combined methodological forms*

In determining one's research method, Freedman (2004) reasons that: "Generally speaking, research methods should lead logically from research questions" and "the form of a research question often reveals a particular point of view on its topic" (p 187). In this study, I examine community arts education practices with women through the co-creation of online/offline creative community utilizing social media and SMPC practice. My choice of method is a combination of arts-based research, and community action research. The study of art education frequently blends intellectual inquiry coming from academic research traditions, the educational or practitioner inquiry of a teacher or leader, and artistic practices, which includes a process of inquiry leading to both the creation and examination of art. These are brought together in imaginative combinations of praxis. After all, how can an artist create without her creativity manifesting itself within the process? Fortunately, these modes of knowledge-making are found within the realm of qualitative research, which develops and adapts its form in relation to the individual conducting research. After all, "qualitative research is an intellectual, creative, and rigorous craft that the practitioner not only learns but also develops through practice" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 4).

Standing as a bridge between fields, Art Education research is well situated to link the rigorous traditional qualitative research methods found in the social sciences and education with the evocative ways of knowing found in the Fine Arts; ways which Lampert (2006) describes as being "flush with open-ended, heuristic problem solving" (p. 216). As a discipline, art education continuously moves between the social sciences and the fine arts that comprise our field (Freedman, 2004). This combined nature makes our field innovative, meaningful, and practical, amounting to a willingness to explore and develop new theory that crosses disciplinary boundaries and extends across social realms. For these reasons and others, art education researchers today ought to strive towards comfort, investigating the grey areas where methodologies, disciplines and social establishments collide (Rolling, 2010). Indeed, Art Education's engagement with theory and society results in our ways of knowing changing as rapidly as society itself. This meshes well with practitioner and community-based approaches to research, which are adept in addressing complex and sensitive social issues through the arts.

Leavy's (2013) presentation "Transdisciplinary and Arts-Based Research: Building Research in New Shapes to Meet New Demands," invited by a working group on qualitative

research at Concordia University, establishes the need for research that addresses growing methodological complexity as researchers design methodologies specific to their area of study. In her doctoral dissertation at Ohio State, Suominen (2003) used a combination of photography, arts research methods and autoethnography for her thesis entitled “Writing with photographs, re-constructing self: An arts-based autoethnographic inquiry.” Her work touched on themes of urban isolation, immigration and her experience of life as a woman alone in a new urban environment. The methods Suominen employed combined (to name a few): “photography, participant observation, photo-writing, memory work, [...] public display and discussion of [...] photographs and creative texts” (p. ii).

My study incorporates visual, textual, and participant-generated creative products to address part of the research question, with the primary difference being my position as community facilitator (as well as a collaborating producer of art), and the collaborative community arts-based process that unites many women in this inquiry process. Suominen’s resulting visual, creative and narrative work demonstrated a natural interplay between these methods in a way that the discussion of them could not fully portray, as the arts represent complex information in a manner that is intuitively accessible. I can very much understand and relate to this, as it is no secret that researchers working in arts-based and integrated methodologies still struggle to defend their methodology, as the standards and scientific criteria, “which have developed out of positivism, are inappropriate for evaluating artistic inquiry” (Leavy, 2009, p. 15). I would also add that the academic forms of combined arts-based research also require adaptation. The dissertation format and exhibition needed to be stretched, shaped and molded, in order to accommodate the shared ownership of creative projects and the community itself and the multiplicity of voices and modes of analysis present across several spaces and stages of this study.

Rolling (2010) describes arts-based research as being, “poststructural, prestructural, performative, pluralistic, proliferative, and postparadigmatic” (p. 104). He presents arts-based research as often incorporating a plurality of methods, which can lead to conflict due to contradictions present within their philosophical underpinnings. However, he proposes, “the solution is in the freedom to generate contentious admixtures of methodology and audience, inaugurating fresh perspectives, visions, and insights” (p.108). This space of contradiction where conflicting academic cultures of different disciplines collide are furthermore appreciated by

some as meaningful grounds for revealing knowledge and ways of knowing which scholars have learned to ignore (Walker, 2013). Instrumental to bringing recognition for the arts as research into the academy, Elliot Eisner was himself once denounced for exactly that, trying to wear two different hats, those of both art and education (discussed in a reflections on Eisner, Arizona State University, n.d.). His exclamation is understandable, then: “good research often complicates our lives” (Eisner, 1997, p. 8).

Building on this vision of arts-based research as performative, pluralistic and proliferative, together with art-education’s greatest strength as originating from within its very intersectional nature that unites audiences and fuses methodologies, is the notion that the incorporation of digital technologies into creative and research practices will lead to new representations, research methods, characteristics and capabilities of art education research. Barone and Eisner (2011) observe “the availability of new [technological] means has consequences not only for how one addresses the world and reports its features but it has consequences for features to be forms” (p. 5). This has started to be seen, as a variety of new realizations within art education research have been emerging from the integration of these new technologies.

Having used an integrated methodology, Etmanski (2007) attests to the “catalytic and dialogical power of the intersection of research with art, education, community development and activism” (iv.). In considering the requisite for her to take up multiple roles within her doctoral dissertation research, she says, “it was necessary for me to establish an identity in each of these areas to complete this participatory, action-oriented, arts-based study in the Faculty of Education” (p. 69). It is characteristic of such combined research methodologies frequently employed in art education to blend well with the roles and needs of the art education researcher.

Such methodologies could be envisioned as having been designed to be combined; “Clearly, ABER [arts based educational research] could adapt to almost any qualitative methodology. Narrative inquiry, ethnography, phenomenology and action research are obvious fits” (Smithbell, 2010, p. 1597). Indeed, combined methodologies have developed from this very need to address a wide range of ways of knowing, multiple audiences (such as communities and institutions) and to address the goals of the Art Education practitioner and researcher. The combined methodology I have employed is in keeping with the experiences of Suominen, and Etmanskibe, and with numerous resounding calls for the freedom and knowledge-generating capacity of meaningful integrated, emergent arts and qualitative methods. It developed

progressively from my various praxes, generating possibilities from the nexus of my connected, though previously distinct, sites of knowing/being. My experience navigating the accompanying roles and positioning myself within the group is discussed later within roles and in analysis.

### ***Overview of the study: Applying combined methods***

This research project intersected with my ongoing practice as an artist, community facilitator, and social media participant. I drew upon my experiences organizing and participating in social media photography communities (SMPCs), and my accessibility to SMPC community leaders (for interviews and insights). As such, I took on the role of participant researcher (being both within and external to the community). In this manner I was able to design a community-based action research project studying the creation and facilitation of an online and “on foot” location-based social media photography community (SPMC) for women. The individual participants who collaborated in the study and in our community development included: the members of the women’s SMPC, *Her Mind’s Eye*, existing leaders of other established social media community groups, and myself as teacher/facilitator/participant.

This study followed a combined approach, integrating Community-Action Research (Brown & Reitsma-Street, 2003; Senge & Scharmer, 2001), and arts-based research (McNiff, 2008; Leavy, 2009), with the emergent analysis and organization techniques found in qualitative methods, which are discussed further under analysis. This combined methodology allowed for research conducted through active practitioner work (i.e. community organizing/facilitating) and collaboration in a community setting, in conjunction with ongoing artistic creation by the participants and researcher. Together, these methods established multiple malleable access points for co-creating the community: exploring/experiencing collective social media photography practices and generating, gathering, analyzing, and presenting the outcomes of the data. Jointly, these methods and methodologies came to form a framework for conducting research within the organic, living environment of collaborative social media photography communities.

The first of the two combined methods, arts-based research methodology, proved to be a subject and site-appropriate means for investigating emergent themes as they developed within the group. McNiff (2008) explains, “The art of the art-based researcher extends to the creation of a process of inquiry” (p. 34). Since my own art practice had existed for some time on Instagram, my research explored the co-creation of collective art practice, alternative means for applying

Instagram, and the design of place-based community in collaboration with the women participating.

In the development of an online and offline meeting place (SMPC) for women living in cities, the methodology of Community Action Research (CAR) was a valuable resource. Community Action Research has strong participatory underpinnings, meaning that the methodology is focused on working collaboratively and closely with the community, so as to respond and adapt to the needs of both the community and the participants (Reitsma-Street, 2002). Unlike participatory action research, which seeks to achieve or solve specific social justice problems, my application of CAR focused primarily on the goal of community development itself. As such, it allowed participants freedom in both individual and collaborative diverse expression and exploration of ideas. CAR enables active leadership from a community facilitator and some degree of direction. Not all actions or decisions need be emergent and developed by the community, but inquiry is conducted alongside community.

For women, this is particularly valuable, as compared with participatory methods and those that call participants to conduct research proceedings. It means reduced commitment and responsibility, flexibility, and less time required of them overall as participants. It also frees them to focus on the creation of art and their own interactions in community and the development of community roles, while also providing numerous opportunities for participants to impact the program and research through the researcher/community facilitator's ongoing gathering of feedback. Lastly, CAR is valuable for informal education and community development, since as a facilitator, I was able to introduce and initiate actions from my experience as a teacher and SMPC participant, while observing, listening to, and revising based on the community's responses to these actions. I could apply my time and skills to the group members, reducing the work required of them and taking many responsibilities upon myself. In this framework, it was also possible for me to step back and share responsibilities more as individuals' circumstances changed, and knowledge about community management and collective creative production increased.

Corresponding with the inductive process of data generation and analysis common to both arts-based research and community action research, qualitative research methods tend to focus on coding the data to identify emergent themes, rather than developing and searching for answers to theories in the initial stages of research (Creswell, 2007). This was particularly useful

for identifying reoccurring matters of importance in women's urban life experience presented within photographic explorations and the development of our weekly thematic challenges. These "challenges" served to support and emphasize matters that arose in discussion and community theme development characteristic of Community Action Research. In the following sections, I expand on these methodologies, beginning Community Action Research [CAR] according to Senge and Scharmer (2001) and Reitsma-Street (2002), followed by Arts-based Research following McNiff (2008) and Leavy (2009), and finally principles of qualitative research methods.

### ***Community action research and situated, collaborative knowledge creation***

Community Action Research (CAR) is an outgrowth of Action Research, and as such, shares important foundations, which are presented briefly. Thering (2007) identifies Action Research as being theoretically grounded in Dewey's ideas of experiential learning, communicative learning as put forth by Habermas (1971) and Friere (1970) (which recognizes differences between cultural codes, expectations and social norms), and from Habermas, and Mezirow's ideas of transformative/emancipatory learning and critical self-reflection (1991; 1996). Action research (McKniff & Whitehead, 2006) is, in a sense, a recognition and study of the natural cycle of knowledge production, involving creation, implementation, observation and revision.

In considering the goals of Community Action Research, I will first provide a brief look at its two origins, which reveal differing perspectives of what it is meant to accomplish, and who the audience is. One orientation of community action research emerged from the United States and one from the United Kingdom (Smith, 2007). Smith describes their differences: "The British tradition – especially that linked to education – tends to view action research as research oriented toward the enhancement of direct practice" (p. 24) while the American approach holds social change at its core. The action research orientation of Canada reveals a country historically situated between the two, resulting in a CAR that is adaptable. We are able to navigate between the two and align with one orientation or other as the need requires. A more detailed overview of Community Action Research illuminates and presents further insights into this methodology. Community Action Research [CAR] acknowledges the role of the community researcher as a form of leader or "facilitator," which brings with it certain power dynamics that often interrupt the possibility of authentic participatory research creation (Brown & Reitsma-Street, 2003).

Brown and Reitsma-Street view the researcher as an activist in addition to their role as researcher. Indeed, “CAR practitioners may consider themselves activists as much as they consider themselves researchers” (p. 66).

In my case, coupled with my feminist orientation, my activist role is similar to that of a relational artist, who believes that “spontaneous social relations are vanishing in the information age as communication becomes restricted to particular areas of consumption: coffee shops, pubs and bars, art galleries” and I would add, increasingly social media spaces (Part of the Process, 2006, para. 2). Furthermore, a means of addressing this is by “creating encounters or moments of sociability within these ‘communication zones’ for non-scripted social interaction” (para. 3). Resonating with the relational artist’s goal of creating communication sites, key to the CAR approach to Action Research “is a core premise: that Industrial Age institutions face extraordinary challenges to evolve which are unlikely to be met in isolation. Collaboration and joint knowledge-building is vital” (Senge & Scharmer, 2001, p. 2). Additionally, they explain that CAR embeds “change oriented projects within a larger community of practitioners, consultants, and researchers. Like action research, community action research confronts the challenges of producing practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives” (p. 2). Working within the Canadian context, Brown and Reitsma-Street (2003) identify the values of CAR as: “social justice, agency, community connectedness, and critical curiosity” (p. 61). Drawing from extensive research and writings, Brown and Reitsma-Street’s heartfelt portrait describes the consequence and magnitude of the central actor in the philosophy and practice of CAR, community.

Not a mythical or idealized community, nor necessarily a permanent geographic one: rather, community is an entity with a history and future that go beyond individual people. Nor does a person belong to just one community, but to several. Communities are the key places and spaces of social relations, within which individuals live and work in their everyday worlds ... and in which they contest the regimes of power, uncertainty, pain, and possibility ... No one person or group is the "real knower" of the life-worlds of either permanent or transient communities ... Neither is local knowledge complete or impartial ... A community action research project is a journey of those who are embedded in past relations to one or more communities and who care about their present and future. (p. 64)

Reitsma-Street (2002) points out that CAR is especially useful when there is a lack of consensus about the key issues at hand and their proposed solutions, indifference to these issues, and/or

little funding to address the situation. This fits especially well with the needs of the diverse, cross-national, woman's mobile photography community where I have conducted my research; it is one of many self-sustaining grassroots social media organizations, containing diverse populations from differing social backgrounds with different needs and goals behind their community group participation. For those who are part of other overlapping communities, be they other Instagram groups, fine arts or academic institutions, or even non-art community groups, CAR can open the curtain to reveal the inner-workings of leadership, collective activities, institutional involvement, and collective knowledge (Brown & Reitsma-Street, 2003).

Community Action Research's primary focus on action within the community can help participants not to feel an "individual sense of paralysis and [can increase] the collective energy for progressive policies and practices" (Reitsma-Street, p. 70). She highlights that knowledge about complex issues belongs to the collective rather than any one person, "Thus CAR is a collective journey towards understanding what builds and what destroys healthy community" (p. 71). In CAR, multiple methods are used with a focus on those that garner broad public interest while participants challenge accepted ideas, develop new relationships and networks, and potentially share their results to influence local community members and/or policy makers.

This relational and participatory adaptation of action research resonates with feminist concepts of openness, the multiplicity of ways of knowing/approaches (discussed earlier in the literature), and emancipatory goals. It also supports philosophies of inclusion that are central to my research design, and to what I believe is necessary for the creation of a healthy, innovative learning community. The understanding of community presented in the earlier quote from Brown and Reitsma-Street (2003) provided me with the foundation to adapt action research from the more traditional educational setting, which I was most familiar with, to the less structured spaces of online and offline social media photography communities. The beautiful vision that they present of democratic community developed through CAR is one that beckons for the emerging, soulful, and colorful presence of the arts.

### ***Research through the arts and arts-based research***

Arts-based research is an adaptable methodology that integrates well with other forms of research, including participatory and community approaches, and art education praxis. In this study, I utilize Arts-based research according to Leavy (2009) and McNiff (2008), though first, I

draw upon several scholarly sources that offer a brief discussion of research with and through the arts. According to Lynn Butler-Kisber (2002), “Increasingly, educational research suggests that the more traditional, textual descriptions of qualitative findings do not adequately reflect the complexity of studying human behavior” (p. 229). They do not permit the voice of participants to be clearly expressed in accordance with present ethical concerns, and they limit possibilities for multiple interpretations (Butler-Kisber). By contrast, forms of research conducted through the arts allow for greater sharing of power than is present in traditional academic methods, and result in emotional resonance through which the viewer can connect closely to the work (p. 230). This sentiment is echoed by Knowles and Cole (2008); Leavy (2009); Barone and Eisner (2011) and others. Barone and Eisner put it this way: “matters of meaning are shaped [...] by the tools we use. When those tools limit what is expressible or representational, a certain price is paid for the neglect of what has been omitted” (p. 1). Literal language has a tendency to be analytic and orderly, while the arts, though not literal, are especially well versed at evocatively expressing emotion, thus provoking empathetic investment, which often constitutes the most salient aspect of educational research (p. 9). Leavy (2009) adds that:

...the use of arts-based representational strategies brings academic scholarship to a wider audience. Free from discipline-specific jargon and prohibitive (even elitist) barriers, arts-based representations can be shared with diverse audiences, expanding the effect of scholarly research that traditionally circulates within the academy and arguably does little to serve the public good. (p.14)

To this, I add that CAR, coupled with research through the arts also results in the creation of artwork that can then remain in the hands of community members, where it can be applied to new or alternative purposes. They can be re-exhibited, examined, and otherwise personally enjoyed by their creators. According to Barone and Eisner (2011), a central claim to arts-based research is “that it addresses complex and often subtle interactions and provides an image of those interactions in ways that make them noticeable [allowing us to] deepen and make more complex our understanding of some aspect of the world” (p. 3).

I decided to align my project with arts-based research because of the prior existence of my own active arts-practice, utilizing social media photography, and the related practices of several of the participants who joined. Another reason for the arts-based foundation is that the photographic/arts practices and the social media arts community did not exist solely to serve the research. We all brought to the creation of the mobile photography community *Her Mind's Eye*

our unique histories of artistic and/or photographic and community-building practices. Urban women's engagement with an individualized and collaborative artistic social media photography processes resulted in the women's visual-voices, and the issues they bring up, being emergent.

Rolling (2010) explains "arts-based research methodologies are characteristically emergent, imagined, and derivative from an artist/researcher's practice or arts praxis inquiry models; they are capable of yielding outcomes taking researchers in directions the sciences cannot go" (p. 110). McNiff (2008) explains that artistic inquiry "typically starts with the realization that you cannot define the final outcome when you are planning to do the work" (p. 40). The arts generate data from intuitive, emotional, and visual expression: "In the creative process, the most meaningful insights often come by surprise, unexpectedly, and even against the will of the creator [...] but the defining aspect of knowing through art [...] is the emanation of meaning through the process of creative expression" (McNiff, p. 40). This connects precisely with how I came to social media photography as a research practice, and how this resulting project (and the combined-qualitative methods it employs) emerged unexpectedly from early explorations into applications of Instagram and my photographic arts practice within my research.

Barone and Eisner (2011) highlight the potential synergetic relationship between technology and artful forms of research, recognizing the impending capacity for technology to play a highly influential role within arts-based research, with new media allowing for altogether new research possibilities. They explain that: "There is an intimate connection between technology and expressivity, and we are certain that in the future the possibilities of the computer and other electronic devices will be exploited in ways that are even more daring than they have been thus far" (p. 5). It is easy to see how this idea has emerged from Barone and Eisner's (2012) early description of one of the possible criteria for arts-based research being the creation of "Empathetic Understanding and Virtual Realities," where the reader can vicariously inhabit the virtual world through the work, entering into "a new particular psychological landscape, perhaps viewing it for the first time" (p. 98).

### ***Principles of good qualitative and arts-based research***

Butler-Kisber (2010a) lays a framework for identifying good qualitative research. The conditions include: Trustworthiness; Ethics, Access and Consent (ideally an "ongoing, negotiated process" of informed consent (p. 16); Voice (is the researcher's voice present, and are

those of the participants?); Transparency (does the researcher present the findings in a way that “show” what happened, rather than telling?); Reflexivity (when transparency is present, the researcher will need to look at herself and account for identity and bias). Particularizability (rather than making generalized claims which are not possible with a small population, the reader can connect the story to another instance and find “confirmation and/or new understandings of experiences and phenomena” (p. 15). Creswell (2007) calls this verisimilitude, meaning, it feels like the truth based on prior knowledge.

Butler-Kisber (2010a) argues that the concept of validity, or objective truth is erroneous when applied to qualitative research. In its place she presents trustworthiness. Trustworthy research is rigorous, persuasive, and plausible. It exhibits researcher reflexivity and transparency. It is ethical, addressing issues of access, consent, and voice. Additional indicators of trustworthiness include: time spent in the field, multiple data sources, a breadth of perspectives from individuals taking part within the project, and an ongoing and negotiated process of informed consent (Hays & Singh, p.81)

In considering criteria for determining “good” arts-based research, Barone and Eisner (2012) hesitate to offer a “static criteriology,” or list of ingredients, stating, “This may appear as a dilemma, but it is also a reality. [...] the more detailed and prescriptive the recipe, the more likely that the cakes made from that recipe will be indistinguishable from one another” (p. 155). Still, they present an introduction to possible common criteria, which include *coherence*, which “pertains to the way components in a form hang together” (p. 151), and *generativity*, meaning the work’s significance to society. They further state, “significance doesn’t speak for itself. It requires an interpretive or thematic frame” (p. 153). For example *Her Mind’s Eye* can be seen as providing a thematic framework for the interpretation of women’s urban experiences, the generative impact of which is particularly discernible in our first group exhibition and the group’s collective statement. Similarly, the exhibition expressed coherence through aesthetic design and the reoccurring personal visions of daily life. Additional criteria include *evocation and illumination*, wherein “one begins to *feel* the meanings that the work is (trying) to help its readers grasp” (p. 153), *concision* (expressing an idea clearly and concisely), *social significance* and *incisiveness*, where experiencing a work can “illuminate the heart of a social issue” via one’s feeling and understanding of the conditions of others’ lives through art. In their discussion of rigor in action research, Ary, Cheser Jacobs, Sorensen and Walker (2014) explain,

Generalizability is not a primary goal of action research; rather, the primary goal is to understand what is happening in the specific context in order to make improvements in that context. Action researchers believe that everything is context bound and that the goal is to provide rich detailed descriptions of the context so that others can make comparisons with their context and judge for themselves whether the findings apply (are transferable) (p. 565).

Mills (2003) provides a set of criteria for judging action research, which include the categories of: "interactability of reform, audience, format, prejudices, professional disposition, reflective, life enhancing, action, action – data connection, impact, changes, and colleague response" (p. 3). These numerous categories speak to practical concerns, beginning with "Does your action research lead to action" (p. 3), to questions of the acceptability of the reporting format, appropriateness of audience, representation of researcher prejudices, contribution to the researcher/facilitator's professional disposition and reflective stance, and whether it enhances participants' lives. Additional recommended categories for final considerations include ideas for change, the researcher's continued monitoring of the effects of the study upon her practice, and I would add, when appropriate, the ongoing effects on the community studied as well.

### ***Summary***

The overview of methodologies presented here begins to demonstrate the intersectional nature of arts-based and Community Action Research, and emergent methods. It also provides explanations of the forms and reasons behind each of the individual characteristics of these integrated research methodologies, as they are incorporated within the context of art education, speaking to practitioner, arts and community-engaged agendas. Art education's purpose for using combined methods to address multiple audiences connects with the need to provide a foundation for the creation of programs and practitioner methods in order to address local needs. These objectives and the use of integrated methods are infused with new possibilities as artist/practitioners apply new technologies, towards goals of producing living results, fresh perspectives, evocative representations, and new insights. In the next chapter I provide an overview of the research process incorporating these methods in the creation of this study and the social media photography community *Her Mind's Eye*.

## CHAPTER 4. Research Process

### *Introduction*

This section builds on the preceding overview of methodology, as it details how the combination of arts-based research, Community Action Research, and qualitative methods were incorporated in the research design, as well as the process of data collection and forms of data, ethical accountability and analysis and within the context of Art Education. It presents an overview of how these methods in action led to a similarly blended analysis procedure that drew upon each of the research methods and forms of data produced. Here the different representational forms present within this thesis are discussed, which include combinations of individual and community-developed responses, organized and interpreted to differing degrees by myself as researcher. Furthermore, it discusses how these representations found within the *Description* and *Discussion* have been designed to address the different audiences and research questions at hand; as such it presents accounts of the study of the SMPC *Her Mind's Eye* that speak to practitioner, community member, and academic audiences.

### *Situating Research Design*

The primary focal areas of this research are participants' artistic creations and the construction and study of a social media photography community *Her Mind's Eye*, for women in two urban cities, through the practice of Community Action Research. According to Creswell (2007), "The research process for qualitative researchers is emergent. This means that the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and that all phases of the process may change or shift" (p. 39). There is overlap between the research design and the design of the *Her Mind's Eye* community, (which, for easier understanding, could also be viewed as the curriculum development, structural organization and invitation to would-be members, resulting in the creation of this informal education and community arts mobile photography program). As such, at times I have chosen to situate a discussion primarily within the section of research design, and at other times within the first *Description* chapter called *Making it! Designing the Her Mind's Eye community online and "on the ground."* I have made reference in the text to related text located in different areas. For example, the section on ethics opens up a discussion on participant revelation, which is further elaborated upon within the *Description*, as it relates to choices of

privacy and platforms for creating the group. Here, ethics is discussed in relation to the formation of the group. In some cases, the decision to include a topic in one section or another was mine, as the group development plan and research design overlap, inform, and influence each other. The research design/process that follows reviews the steps taken with the context of research primarily in mind, while chapter six, *Making it!* presents many of the same issues with the needs and context of the community placed at the forefront.

***My roles: Researcher, teacher, facilitator, leader, artist, friend.***

In describing qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (1998) explain: "multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (...) Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). In qualitative research, the researcher is recognized as very much a key instrument or tool of the research process, her roles influencing her approach to "the art of interpretation" integral to this work (Denzin, 2014). Brodsky (2008) adds, "Thus, the researcher is positioned quite closely to raw words and real life, and the researcher as "person" plays a more obvious, if not more profound, role in all stages of research" (para. 1). With this work, my roles similarly included both socially engaged practitioner roles and researcher roles, those of researcher, art teacher, group participant (which includes artist, co-learner and friend) and community organizer/facilitator. These roles were at the core of my data collection and overall research design. The majority of these roles existed within an informal, community-based education and research setting that took place both in physical meetups (in cafés and other public locations in the city) and in online group meeting spaces. In addition to my role as a researcher of the social media photography community *Her Mind's Eye* developed as part of this study, I was also a practitioner-researcher in other existing social media communities, where I conducted several interviews with community leaders in Montreal and Vancouver, (prior to and at the beginning of developing *Her Minds Eye*), and afterwards in Tokyo. Further discussion of the influence of the roles explored throughout this study is found at within *Prelude to Her Mind's Eye* (ch. 6).

Within my research process and data collection, I have sought to find: 1) how an effective mobile photography community can be crafted 2) how it might serve as an informal learning environment through which (these) urban women can examine life in the city and meet particular

needs, such as community and arts-related needs, and, 3) what sorts of artistic and cultural productions women would create through mobile photography, and why. In order to investigate these issues, I approached my research in three parts. For the first part, I examined practices in creating mobile photography communities through interviews with community leaders. The second part involved planning, developing, facilitating and collaborating in creating the mobile photography community *Her Mind's Eye*, within both the online environments of Instagram, Facebook, and e-mail, and through offline, in-person meetups. The third part included a community-engaged, ongoing artistic creation and the exhibition of work created by the women members of the *Her Mind's Eye* community, as well as my own concurrent community-engaged artistic creation. Detailed information about group member recruitment can be found in chapter six: *Prelude to her community*.

### ***Data collection***

This research is strongly situated within a practitioner orientation because it uses the integrated methods of arts-based research, community action research, and inductive qualitative analysis coding methods, where my roles as researcher, teacher, program designer, community member and artist overlap. Biggs and Buchler (2008) use both the term arts-based research and practice-based research, to describe “research in which practice is integral to the method and not just the medium of output” (p. 2). As practitioner researcher, my data sets are complex, involving the data created in the course of my everyday production as an informal teacher/group facilitator, artist, and community leader, while additionally incorporating data specific to the research goals of this program, such as the gathering of participants’ photographs and recording of focus groups. In action research we are conducting qualitative inquiry as insiders. Zeni (2006) illustrates this, “we pursue a question through an often-meandering route, finding appropriate data sources as we go along. When a teacher is studying his or her own practice, many of the traditional guidelines collapse” (p. 9). Zeni explicates action research as being beyond simply “good teaching” because it involves: “1. more systematic documentation and data gathering; 2. more self-reflection in writing; 3. A wider audience (collaboration, presentation, publication)” (p. 11). Similarly, arts-based research contains a practitioner focus that together with these characteristics presented by Zeni, entail key features of my research, data, and data collection as a practitioner researcher.

Data was collected from two main sources and one supplementary source: firstly, from the participants of the *Her Mind's Eye* mobile photography community, and second, practitioner data, or reflective data of my process as community organizer and facilitator. The supplementary source was data gathered from social media photography community (SMPC) leaders in Montreal, Vancouver and Tokyo and was used to inform my development of the SMPC *Her Mind's Eye*. The two groups of *Her Mind's Eye* member/participants and SMPC community leaders are outlined at the start of the thesis within the section *VIPs – Significant Individuals* (p. xiii). The data collected has been divided into focus categories, which included: **self-reflexive data**, personal records (written chronological records also known as personal data logs) and journals, as well as photographs and social media data; **arts-based and photographic data**: photography in on and offline forms (including exhibition data of photo series and artists' statements and associated mobile photography community data); **social media spaces and data**: online communication spaces (written, visual content, and tags, from Facebook, e-mails and Instagram), audio, video and photographic records of workshops, **feedback data** (including focus groups, and online communications), and the supplementary **skilled practitioner data** that includes audio and video interviews, and notes taken from discussions with community leaders and participants who had prior SMPC leadership and arts experience.

*Self-reflexive data: Personal records (creating a SMPC) and journals.*

McKernan (1996) describes personal records as “personal action logs,” “recorded sheets which document a researcher’s activities over a specified time period, e.g. a day, or a week” (p. 110). Such logs (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1998), together with field notes (notes taken following participant meetings and activities), recordings and reflective journals “lend a triangulation aspect to validity” (McKernan, 1996, p.111). The logs I kept included a list of activities completed, lists of tasks requiring completion, and occasionally included contemplative “micro” action-oriented journal entries about key aspects, issues, and questions being addressed or needing attention, (as McKernan acknowledges is a common characteristic of logs). Over time, when certain “actions” became repetitive, my reliance on logs diminished, while my writing of more contemplative reflective journal entries increased.

While such written records “help to open up thinking to new possibilities and interpretations” they also “maintain linear thinking” (Butler-Kisber, 2010b, para. 5.) Watt (2007) speaks to the

importance of keeping a journal, citing that not only does writing the research keep the project moving forward, it is also generative (revealing knowledge to the researcher), enables reflexivity (awareness of the research process, the researcher's own role and her biases/feelings/thoughts), and is in fact the first stage of analysis. Watt further argues that reflexivity is especially important for beginning researchers, in helping them to improve their process. Blakey (2007) approaches the topic of journaling as a means for processing emotional responses, particularly where the researcher may be engaged in work they are passionate about, or dealing with difficult issues. For my work in this little documented area, they were essential for working through confusion and complications/conflicts in my navigating of roles and emerging SMPC praxes. Blakley explains, "Researchers' emotions are a natural part of inquiries. Taken as a whole, they are an untapped resource of information, lending insight into the research process (and) the findings of the study" (para. 11.) Although historically the researcher has been viewed through a positivist lens as "an objective (...) and detached truth teller," the emotionality investment of the researcher is actually an essential component of the work; it is particularly meaningful to feminist and activist research design as "Emotionally engaged research is guided by an ethic of caring: caring for the research (or the issue/topic itself), the research participants, what becomes of the research (including the eventual narrative, research notes, all of the data), and the researcher and the research team" (Blakley, para. 16).

### ***Arts-based and photographic data***

In considering visual data, Leavy (2009) underscores its obvious use for representation of findings, however her focus on a major strength of visual data is that its prolonged engagement with analysis challenges us to move beyond the notion of art simply being a means of representing research findings. She argues that analysis, or, the "interpretive phase of the research" is often rushed due to conventions and practical necessity (p. 231). In this study, the collection of photographic data has spanned a period of many months, with the photos being carefully selected and commented upon by each of the *Her Mind's Eye* photographers, including myself. Participant photographs are located in three spaces: digitally on Instagram, on connected social media platforms (Instagram posts to Facebook), and in print form for an exhibition. Associated data produced through the exhibiting of photographs also includes written artist statements and a collaboratively developed exhibition statement. In my experience, photography

is often a practice of studying the surrounding world and highlighting/selecting a small portion which provides meaningful insight into the human condition. If it is successful, that discovered awareness should be to some degree reproducible and transmittable through empathetic emotional connection by others in a different context. Photography as an arts-based research method has fabulous foundations and capacities.

Photography can facilitate heightened focus on one aspect of a scene, allowing for the creation of a metaphor or microcosmic representation of an entire area, scenario, feeling or experience, all from a single detail. Indeed, since my childhood, the practice of “seeing” through the photographic lens has been central to my own process of learning and knowing. Photography facilitates visual investigation by allowing us to freeze a moment in time, so that we might examine, feel, remember, and form knowledge. Photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson (1952) famously refers to this practice of freezing a specific, vital scene in a still image as capturing “the decisive moment,” as is discussed within his book by the same name.

Many artists and visually-oriented minds tend to frequently think in pictures. The images, together or alone, fill the mind with meaning, memories, colours, and feeling. Juxtaposed, a deep knowing is captured which words may only join in the distant thereafter, if ever. Sometimes, the image can say something that words cannot, or more often, will not. When paired with words, as occurs in social media photography communities (mentioned briefly below), further insight into the photographer’s thoughts and visions is made possible. Susan Sontag (1979) explains this unique capacity for photography to tell individual experiences:

The photographer was thought to be an acute but non-interfering observer—a scribe, not a poet. But as people quickly discovered that nobody takes the same picture of the same thing, the supposition that cameras furnish an impersonal, objective image yielded to the fact that photographs are evidence not only of what's there but of what an individual sees, not just a record but an evaluation of the world. (p.88)

These capacities of photography and others are one reason why numerous methodologies incorporating photography have developed (for example, Pink, 2007; Rose, 2007; Sullivan, 2005; Tinkler, 2013; and Wang & Burris, 1994).

The content created through video, photography and SMP artistic production serve as powerful data-sets, both for their complexity of layered meanings, for their powerful storytelling abilities, and emotive impact. Furthermore, connecting arts-based data with present applications

of photography, visual media, and social media has implications for combined methodologies, as it can “greatly enhance an action research process” since “not only do they [photographs] more clearly depict the realities of people and contexts, but they provide ways in which participants in an action research process can provide a more empathetic understanding of their situation and the issues within it” (Stringer, 2014, p. 116). The focus which arts-based research places upon an individual’s ongoing engagement/practice with an artistic medium connects well to my photographic practice and the work of my participants who have had ongoing/extended engagement with social media photography throughout their daily lives, and have been connected with the surrounding community and discourses that make up this very social visual medium. Indeed, both the urban environment and Internet are now highly saturated with visual imagery and multimedia content, with citizens (having) a high degree of what Duncum (1993) describes as everyday visual literacy, which includes competency in communicating and identifying concepts, thoughts, and more, within visual and media content.

***Social media spaces and data: Instagram, Facebook and e-mail***

The three online spaces where data was collected include Instagram, Facebook and Email. The majority of data was collected within the social media spaces of Instagram and Facebook, and it was much more complex than other sources due to being both visual and social in nature. These social media data sets included written and visual content such as photographs, comments and hashtags. A descriptive example of the ways in which communication occurs across Facebook, Instagram and email is found within the *Description* section, under the subheading, *An Instagram moment: A virtual walk along the path of SMP content creation/distribution, and communication on Instagram*. Further explanation about the movement of data and forms of data can be found within the *Description* section *Digital community across places and spaces*, which describes how these spaces were used by our community, what forms of group content and production (i.e. data) were produced in each space, and how they were shared, under the headings of: Instagram, Facebook, Hashtags, E-mail and the (failed) Blog. Data collected through e-mail consisted of photographs, conversations, event and community organizing information, and artist statements. Emails were primarily used for “official” and focused purposes such as sharing consent forms and arranging exhibition details, as well as to move larger data files, such as photographs for exhibitions.

While traditional art forms and art venues carry associated implications as data sources, which influence analysis, social media poses new possibilities as a site of visual communication, cultural production/distribution, and as an art space. Drawing on the ideas of bell hooks, Leavy (2009) notes that visual arts be considered as sites of social creation, exclusion, and as “an important medium through which struggles for representation occur” which is therefore especially useful to “researchers working from feminist, post-colonial and other critical perspectives” (p. 219). Building on this idea, Aguayo and Calvert (2013) argue that social media presents a new site where emerging forms of representation are now occurring. New technological innovations have expanded the possibilities of visual research, such as photoblogs, which “can be analysed as diaries that are housed on the web” (Leavy, p. 230). Aligning with this recognition of blogs and photographic social media accounts functioning as valuable data sets is the celebrated feminist rallying cry “the personal is political” (the origins of which are uncertain, but it was originally published in *Notes from the Second Year: Women’s Liberation* in 1970 (Hanisch, 2006). In her introduction to memory work, Small (2007) states: “It is generally agreed that a method for women needs to be one in which women present their thoughts and feelings in their own words rather than the words of a researcher” (p. 1).

Through memory work, a variation of which could be recognized in some mobile photography practices, Small (2007) argues that the participants are co-researchers, investigating their own realities and thus eliminating the hierarchy between the researcher and the researched. According to Graham (1984), in creating the narrative of their stories “unlike ethnography and observation, story-telling is not a covert method of data-collection. The narrator knows she is providing information” (p. 107) and therefore can choose the content and the amount that she wants to tell. In approaching Social Media Photography as a combination of diary, personal storytelling, as a visual narrative, and process of collective creation, opportunities are opened for women to tell their collective and unique stories, potentially critically challenging issues connected to their lived experiences in the urban environment, and participating as co-researchers of their own lived experiences and representatives of their experiences. I hope that these examples illustrate the possibilities for social media photography as a dataset and method. The multiplicity of these datasets collected from online communications provides triangulation through “the inclusion of perspectives from diverse sources [which] enables the inquirer to clarify meaning by identifying ways the phenomena are being perceived” (Stringer, 2014, p. 93).

Social media datasets are also valuable for maintaining the ongoing communication that is necessary in some forms of action research (p. 132) and “to communicate with a broad range of people locally, regionally, nationally” and “to facilitate communication between participants and sharing of materials” (Stringer, p. xix). It is especially true that these data are produced and shared by participants and myself in real time and for specific purposes, including network development, exploration of a given topic, and community planning, and remain (for the most part) contextualized within their original surroundings.

***Feedback data:*** *Focus groups anonymous surveys and in situ conversations with community.*

Feedback data was continuously gathered throughout the course of this study. Feedback from participants was frequently asked for through Facebook chat throughout the duration of the study as a means of aiding me in addressing problems and identifying what worked. Feedback was also requested during every one of our in-person meetings and photo walks, both through specific questions about issues that arose, as well as open-ended requests for feedback. Our regular group meetings as well as online communications served as the primary sites of ongoing discussion with participants about the process as well as group members’ experiences of the successes, and the needed improvements of *Her Mind’s Eye*. Prior to each group meeting, I would prepare a number of questions about both specific and generic issues to discuss with group members during the meeting. The meetings were recorded and following the meetings I would review and write notes about key responses.

Throughout the project I had several opportunities to speak one on one with many of the *Her Mind’s Eye* members in situ (i.e. during group photo walks and neighbourhood visits to potential gallery sites), to learn more about their individual experiences with the project, in city, and a bit about their backgrounds. Such discussions were very informal and conversational, with an effort to remain participant-led.

At the close of the study I deviated from this model of group meeting feedback, online feedback and conversational feedback, and for one of our final gatherings, I arranged a focus group which had a focused agenda of addressing open-ended questions within the categories of planning (the community), participating (group communications, and the ability to express oneself), reflecting (on learning and expressing urban experiences), and your life (how the group connected to participants’ lives), in order to provide greater insight into the six preceding

months. Audio recordings of two focus groups (one in Montreal and one in Vancouver) were conducted, and overall these were presented to participants as an opportunity to critique and consider the overall experience and structure of the SMPC *Her Mind's Eye*.

Stringer (2014) describes focus groups as similar to group interviews: “Focus questions should follow the same rules and formats as those used for interviews, employing neutral language and maximizing opportunities for participants to express themselves in their own terms” (p. 111). Some of the conditions that should be present in a focus group include questions that should be “without the constraints of interpretive frameworks derived from researcher perspectives, [...] or theoretical constructs” (p.111), that “participants should be respectful and nonjudgmental of each other” (p. 112) and that “each person should have opportunities to express his or her opinions and perspectives” (p.111). Examples of open-ended questions that were asked of the participants include: “What was the most helpful to you about this group?” “What would you like to add or change in the future?” “How has this group impacted your photography practice?” “What have you discovered about your photography?” “What is the biggest thing you will take away from this experience?” “What did you learn in this community? (...about yourself? ...about the city? ...about others? ...about photography? ...about women in the city?)”.

Pavlish and Pharris (2012) add “Focus group data collection generally involves gathering a group of people and creating a comfortable environment that is conducive to open, honest dialogue on carefully planned questions” (p. 198). Our focus group was built upon the existing structure of the group meetings. We met in a location not far from our prior meeting spaces, but one that enabled us have a more private space for the group, and the environment of collaborative and open exchange was already established in our group, and strengthened through our recent collective efforts to launch the exhibition. Following Pavlish and Pharris’s recommendation, the group was both videotaped and audiotaped.

This designation of having a focus group rather than an ordinary group meeting was important, as it provided the group members with an opportunity to shift roles, from their positions as mobile photographers and community members, to their roles as “participants,” thus enabling an opportunity to discuss our group in a different manner. The participants now responded from their positions as experts in the living of (or the action of) this research. Focus groups gathering further collective knowledge development and in-depth is described as inquiry as, “Group

dialogue generally creates more diversity and breadth in topic exploration and provides an opportunity to co-construct meaning. This usually leads to more elaborate accounts of social norms and practices” (Pavish & Pharris, 2012, p. 2014). Despite our ongoing group dialogue in meetings, this special designation of a focus group enabled us to more deeply delve into our collective co-construction of meaning.

***Skilled practitioner data: Interviews with community leaders***

During my master’s dissertation (which also used action research), I recognized the influence that discussions which had taken place with other teachers and community members had had on my curriculum design. In this instance, and given that the area of SMPCs is in its infancy with hard-working local leaders often being clearly identifiable (and often minimally recognized for their extensive, frequently volunteer efforts), I chose to acknowledge their feedback as data, gathered through semi-formal interviews, rather than casual practitioner discussions, so as to more easily highlight their influence and credit them for their contribution and advice as it emerges through the presentation of the creation of *Her Mind’s Eye*. I want to acknowledge and recognize the work of those who have influenced me in defining and developing the field of SMPC through their practice, thus to be sure that everyone is represented, each community member whom I spoke with is presented in the opening section, (VIP) significant individuals. It should be noted that they may not share the same philosophies about SMPCs or procedures for group organization as I present throughout this thesis.

Interviews with community leaders were oriented towards my need to develop greater understanding as a community facilitator/practitioner, and for curriculum design. These interviews took place primarily at the outset of this study, both prior to and in conjunction with my creation of the *Her Mind’s Eye* social media photography community. The primary purpose of these interviews was to determine, for my own group facilitation and planning, the existing successful practices and philosophies operating in social media photography communities. Practitioner interviews enabled me to better identify and understand those existing practices and philosophies, which I (as an art teacher, artist and prior SMPC member) viewed as containing aspects that I desired to model. These findings were then intuitively applied within my community design and are discussed within the overall narrative of community development in the *Description* and *Discussion* sections, as they emerge.

The format of the interviews was semi-structured, and where possible, were participant-guided. Although far from the structure of life history research, having originally learned to interview within the framework of life history, and having adapted these methods to semi-structured interviews with a practitioner/curriculum focus, I continue to base my interview methods on the principles of “relationality; mutuality; empathy (reflexivity, being the “other”); care, sensitivity and respect” (Cole and Knowles, 2001, p. 25, originally point form, punctuation mine). These principles are made visible in Cole and Knowles’ interview process emphasizing open-ended questions, attentive listening to the interviewee, (so as to adjust questions as required and pay heed to aha! moments and serendipitous discoveries, and an understanding that the individual being interviewed is the expert in her or his own story. Despite the informal nature of these interviews, informed consent was gained from SMPC community leaders through detailed consent forms. Interviews were conducted in the interviewee’s location of choice, which, in all cases was a local coffee shop (and in one case a follow-up meeting on Skype). During the interviews, I took point-form notes, primarily as aids for determining the interview questions that followed. After these interviews, prior to their transcription, I re-listened to the interviews, and reviewed my notes and reflections on key points from which to base my activities and philosophies in constructing *Her Mind’s Eye*.

My engagement with mobile photography practices and online communities, and my affiliation with the Montreal Instagramers group over the last few years made me well-suited and well-positioned to conduct interviews with its founder, Hind Akhiyat. Furthermore, as an insider, I already have some understanding of the challenges and practices of facilitating mobile photography communities. During my visit to Vancouver, I met with @girlclock who has become a leader of Instagramers Vancouver. Prior to the start of the project, two SMPC leaders were interviewed about their history and experience as a facilitator/organizer of neighbourhood and/or online art communities and/or as a committed participant. The interviews lasted 1-2 hours; some of the questions that were asked include: “How was this group formed?” “How does this group thrive?” “How would you describe the members of this group?” “What do you enjoy most about the group?” and “What would you change about the group, or in an ideal world, how would you approach facilitation or organization differently?” Other interviews were conducted after the research phase of *Her Mind’s Eye*, and due to limitations of the length of this dissertation, they are not discussed here. These individuals’ names and affiliations are mentioned

however in the significant individuals' sections, as my interviews with them further informed my understanding of the democratic and community-driven art ideals that have been foundational to SMPCs.

*Ethics & identifiability: On Instagram and mobile photography spaces.*

As is true for all datasets, when employing photography (particularly social media photography as a data set), unique ethical considerations in the form of limitations and possible risks present themselves. Since mobile photography often deals with themes of place and individual life experiences, there exists the possibility that participants might reveal too much of their own lives, and/or may be physically locatable through geographic data embedded in their photos. This has been addressed through a mandatory introductory information session in which legal and ethical concerns were presented along with guidelines for choosing one's own level of online sharing. The focus of this workshop was on safety, security, and managing one's online identity/(ies). Participants were also familiarized with the terms of service and privacy policy of Instagram, as well as community concerns that arose from the collective users of Instagram within recent duration to the study. Furthermore, although they were informed that within this study they retain all ownership and copyright of their images, they were notified of the ever-present possibility that their images might be accessed, altered, or distributed in ways that they do not want, online. Participants were shown how to report image misuse, how to delete unwanted comments, and to block and report feedback from unwanted sources online (such as spam).

Due to the online nature of the project (posting content online and being associated with an active online community), all participants were acknowledged as identifiable, and group members or visitors who attended as "non-participants" were notified of the nature of the study through posted notices online and in-person, or through verbal notices. Because of the numerous concerns, and the importance of members being able to grapple freely with these issues, participants were also given the option of participating within the group and social media spaces, to the degree to which they were comfortable. They were able to adjust or change this choice at anytime, which meant that, if they wanted, they could choose to only attend in-person meetings. Similar concerns arose around the use of Facebook, however since Instagram is owned by Facebook, there existed a degree of overlap regarding terms of service and policies. More

information about the ethical aspect of the study and the actions and choices that took place to address them can be found within the *Making it!* section (ch.7) in the *Description*.

***Representation of findings: Her influence and involvement***

Analysis of this SMPC participants' works were discussed with participants prior to proceeding, and all data representations of participants (their photos and comments) have undergone member checks prior to dissemination or publication. This was done by emailing writing to participants, and by providing ongoing updates regarding the progression of the writing through a special Facebook group created just for those represented within the research study. This ongoing process of communication and negotiation in the writing of the study enabled me to ensure that all members continued to be in agreement and aware of the advancements of the thesis, the ways in which it was being interpreted and presented, and the details of the chapters written.

Additional member checks were accomplished through many small discussions, such as individually between group members and I on Facebook chat, whenever I sensed that a particular topic or representation of an individual required additional clarification or permissions, prior to dissemination of written content to the group for member checks. Of course, all of the participants' content (i.e. photographs, written records...) shared within the *Discussion* and *Description* sections had previously been distributed online independently by each of the women, and thus was available to all of the group members. Ongoing negotiation of consent also occurred throughout the year, as I frequently discussed my plans for representing the data, for example, when members' works were presented at various conferences. In this way, I was able to learn (for example) that the majority of the women wanted to be well-identified for their valuable contributions to this research, and their photographic creations. (This was a factor in my revising the consent form at a later stage of research to allow participants greater flexibility in selecting how they would be represented in varying contexts.) This process had a secondary beneficial effect of further reinforcing our identity as a group, as we recalled memories of our collaboration. During these times, I encouraged the women to add any of their additional thoughts and feedback following review of my writing, particularly if they felt changes ought be made to their own work or my representation of an event or the group in general.

## CHAPTER 5: Analysis Process

### *Analysis Process: Introduction*

Action research, community action research, and arts-based research are by no means uncharted territory, however, all three have in common the absence of a map or guideline providing a highly structured process by which to develop concrete conclusions or widely generalizable theory. Arts-based research draws upon practitioner experience in the arts. For art educators, I believe it also draws upon the collaborative processes of teaching and learning through the arts, where teacher/facilitator guides share creative processes which are then enriched, experimented with and adapted by students or collaborators. Two significant understandings of community action research are: first, that the resulting productions and representations of research are primarily for the community itself; and second, that the community holds the capacity to serve as a mode of analysis (Ozanne & Anderson, 2010). The following introductory discussion of analysis provides the foundation for understanding the detailed overview of the analysis process that takes place in this study, found throughout the chapters to come. Detailed and content-specific descriptions of the analysis processes are presented within the introductions to each of the chapters that follow, in order to explain the unique analysis features employed, and how they connect to the overall presentations of the study and the chapter's findings.

### *Analysis*

The analysis process followed from the three methodological foundations of this study: incorporated traditions from the arts, coding and the development of emergent themes, and teacher/leader analysis alongside collaborative community selection. These come respectively from arts-based research analysis (Leavy, 2009), emergent analysis, connecting with Margolis and Rowe's (2011) analysis of photographs, reviewed prior to the representation of photographic themes in chapter 13, and applied within action research (Mills, 2003) alongside the community as a unit of analysis from Community Action Research (Senge & Scharmer, 2001). These methodological forms and their associated data analysis techniques spanned the data collection process. Both the analysis techniques and the forms of data that followed from these methods supported the ethical considerations and goals of this study. As Creswell explains, "The process

of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process—they are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project” (p. 150).

This discussion of analysis begins with an overview of Mills’ (2003) review of analysis in action research, followed by the practical application of Mills by Lau-Smith’s (1995-2010) model of analysis, which provides an explanation of each of the steps of analysis in action research, and how each was employed within the study. Next, I introduce the *Description* section (that follows research design) as an intermediary space wherein these steps take place. This is followed by a discussion of the community as a model of analysis, and arts-based analysis techniques, which are not described by Mills, and are predominant in this study in both the examination, selection and presentation of content. Therefore these three modes of analysis include: collective analysis through the revisionary community action research cycle and collaborative selection of focus themes, arts-based analysis through photographic traditions of meaning making and the selection of exhibition content, and analysis through coding, deep reading, chronological and narrative organization, and interpretation.

I created a *ladder of analysis* (diagram below) in order to demonstrate how these modes of analysis conducted in different ways by different figures in the study function together, enabling one to climb towards complex knowledge and a widened scope of understanding. Although this ladder demonstrates part of the sequential nature of analysis that took place, the process of arts-based analysis and community analysis overlapped. Analysis was often ongoing, as both forms occurred concurrently and discoveries informed one-another. The ladder shows the chronological order in which this occurred, but does not represent a progression to a higher stage of analysis, as no single manner led to greater discoveries. Rather, different forms of analysis led to different representations. While this thesis is the researcher’s representation of the study, the exhibition was another, involving photographs, artists’ statements, exhibitions statements, and the local, relational (in-person) representation of the *Her Mind’s Eye* community in the urban environment.



*Figure 1.* Ladder of analysis: Combining arts, community, and qualitative analysis methods

### *Building on a combined model of analysis*

In his discussion of the analysis of action research data, Mills (2003) shares numerous techniques for approaching the analysis of action research data, emphasizing, “There is no substitute for taking time to fully immerse yourself in your data. [...] Read and reread, listen and re-listen, watch and rewatch. [...] Struggle with the nuances and caveats, the subtleties, the persuasive, the incomplete” (p. 99). In her resource, drawing upon and applying action research as described by Mills (2003), Lau-Smith (1995-2010) provides a five-step model, “Step 1: transcription of any recorded data. Step 2: Preliminary exploratory analysis. Step 3: Making connections to the research questions. Step 4: Inter-rater reliability. Step 5: Interpret[ation of] findings” (para. 3). Step one involves transcribing audio recordings such as fieldnotes. With other forms of data, this step is tantamount to making the data accessible. For me, working with photographs in social media spaces, this additionally meant creating printed records that I could easily take notes on. In step two, data is explored through multiple readings, and preliminary emergent themes are

developed. Numerous notations are made throughout data and transcripts and the researcher takes note of any emerging ideas. In step three, the central themes (or issues which the research sought to address) are addressed through generating themes from the research questions, following which, the next stage of themes (overarching emergent discoveries from preliminary analysis, which speak to the research question themes) are gathered, along with sub-categories that describe specific components of these general emergent discoveries for the purpose of coding.

At this point, the researcher then returns to her data (transcripts, descriptions, and in my case, photographs and comments) and reviews it again to identify whether these codes fit, require modification, and to locate data that informs the category. The fourth step involves a secondary review of the data as it is organized. For myself, the secondary review took place with my advisor as well as with the women of *Her Mind's Eye* who reviewed and were invited to submit changes. For example, in meetings with my advisor, some important themes that emerged included how the philosophy and leadership style of the SMPC intersected with the needs of women in urban communities, and influenced the levels of group member participation in *Her Mind's Eye*. Another theme that emerged was that of privacy and the benefits and drawbacks of online spaces. The overarching themes that emerge connected with the research questions. This central theme included the making and running of *Her Mind's Eye* (practitioner-oriented), how *Her Mind's Eye* and social media photography was used by and of use to the women in Montreal and Vancouver, women's experiences of living in these cities and how they were presented through their photography, and finally, the implications for art education.

An additional component of analysis specific to Community Action Research embraces "the community as the unit of analysis," a process which requires the researcher's sustained engagement and relationship with the community, "investing time to grasp the dynamic, complex and heterogeneous nature," and co-learning: "engage(ing) the community in reflection, analysis and interpretation" (Ozanne & Anderson, 2010, p. 126). This was certainly the case in *Her Mind's Eye* and can be seen in the participants' selection of themes, their individual arts-based selection processes for exhibiting and otherwise presenting photographic works, and ongoing participant checks. In addition to the stages of analysis specific to the writing of the dissertation, analysis occurred throughout the course of the study. For example, focus group questions were composed from issues that had emerged throughout the spiraling action cycles, wherein

questions and problems identified by group members or myself, and in conjunction with group discussions and reflective meetings with my advisor, were then discussed and addressed within group meetings and with individual members. This demonstrates how the community, like the action researcher, engages with the revisionary/spiraling analysis cycle of Action Research. Mills (2000) concurs with the core of action research and qualitative research principles following models as put forth by Creswell (2007), recognizing that a description of the study is required, which could be done in any number of ways, such as chronologically, narratively, or according to theme, as action research does not stipulate how this must be done. For this study, I have found that in addressing different research foci, descriptions involved a combination of chronological representation and categorization. In the *Making it!* section of the *Description*, this categorization naturally addressed the various stages of constructing the community. In the #SaturdayInHerMind themes section, categories were developed by participants chronologically over a period of weeks, both within our group meetings, through online discussions and individual theme proposals. I then further interpreted the women's photographs and accompanying written commentary through the use of sub-categories.

These *Descriptions*, while interpretive in nature and representing analysis within *Her Mind's Eye* by both myself and group members, also came to form an important part of my data, as they served as an intermediary space between data organization, categorization, final analysis, and reflection. Therefore within my construction of the *Discussion* section at the end of this thesis, I have drawn upon the *Description* section in my interpretation and analysis of the participants' interpretations and of their work, while incorporating some additional quotes, images, and my reflections as a researcher and a program facilitator (similar to the voice of the teacher/leader present in action research). These were incorporated into my representation of the themes that emerged in relation to each of the research questions.

These *Discussion* chapters present themes which emerged in the study, beginning with the making of *Her Mind's Eye*, with emergent themes around the construction, philosophy, and ongoing facilitation of the group, followed by themes around the topic of how a social media photography community for women was used by and useful for women, and next, what the women's photographs told of their urban experiences, and finally, the discussion of the implications for art education in the conclusion, with recommendations and future possibilities.

### ***Arts-based and photographic analysis***

Analysis in arts-based research looks to existing standards of practice common to each art form (Leavy, 2009). Photographic arts practices involve modes of analysis and representation of findings present within the photographic arts, and include such techniques as creating a series from an ongoing body of work (ongoing visual/ photographic inquiries into a subject or subjects), with accompanying artist statements. In social media photography, an art form which has developed from technological advancements that brings with it new standards of practice and forms, such techniques can include collaboratively explored themes or content curated through the use of tags, a process similar to an individual's own reading and coding of her images (Hart, 2014). Though not entirely absent, few studies presently exist that incorporate artistic data, community development data, and various social media data (from comments to tags, chats, conversations and posts.) Therefore, in designing the analysis method, I have worked extensively to take advantage of the unique, combined nature of social media photographers' artistic practice that create images with a focus of personal artistic expression, while also incorporating commenting and community interaction alongside this individual creation process.

### ***Deep readings, informative hidden analysis, and failed analysis attempts***

Other initial analysis attempts such as tag clouds and the organization of all images within another application, with the goal of determining tag frequency, were less successful due to difficulties with moving the data coherently from the Instagram application, and participants' lack of unified tagging styles. In one instance, a list of most frequently used words was produced, which lacked meaningful implications. Hidden analysis included deep readings and preliminary coding of each of the women's images posted in her individual Instagram gallery during the duration of the study, which influenced the interpretations presented, and my development of sub-groups. I describe this as a hidden analysis, because the resulting categories of each woman's photographic galleries are not presented in the description chapters of the thesis, due to an abundance and repetition of content and categories present within the weekly themes and exhibition sections. This hidden stage of analysis, however, did certainly influence my capability to understand the images and influenced my thoughts in generating and interpreting the sub-

themes. This hidden analysis involved a detailed inductive coding following a modified form of Maykut and Morehouse's constant comparison (1994).

To do this, I printed out the corresponding timeline of images from each woman's Instagram galleries, examined the images for their literal content as well as their purpose (from their descriptions of the image, memory of context and discussion, and my interpretation), and from these analyses, inductively generated upwards of 15 thematic categories describing the content and orientation (i.e. mood, objectives) of photos taken by each women. I then wrote out several paragraphs describing each of the women's approaches to mobile photography and the content of the images she created, by using the emergent categories of their photos, their photo captions, and deep reflection around the photos and discussions that took place. This deep reflection was supported by my personal memories and my concurrent experience of being both an actively creating community member, and an engaged community facilitator. Park (2006) describes such knowing as relational *knowing*, which involves the technical, "the moral and expressive dimensions of social life" (p. 86), and also to the significant role of "affectivity in knowing others" (p. 87). The continuous ongoing review of images that took place in many forms brought also feelings associated with each woman's mobile photography practice and a growing awareness of her overall interests. (Indeed, during the group as well as afterwards I continuously made note of the themes and nature of each woman's productions and mobile photography engagement.)

These paragraphs and themes were later used to inform my writing of the *Descriptions* sections, and were also drawn upon in the latter *Discussion* sections. In the Description section, I chose to highlight the collective and participant-generated themes in *#SaturdayInHerMind*, rather than to present categories and interpretations which I had developed in my review of each women's Instagram galleries. In the *Exhibition* section I go a step further, I am here able to present the words that each woman has self-selected to describe herself and her artist's statement about her work in the manner which she personally designed and intended for public sharing. The interpretive voice of the researcher is highly present in the final *Discussion* section that follows the *Description*.

### *Summary*

The methods of analysis present within traditions of action research, community action research, and arts-based research are all innately linked with their forms of knowledge production. The action research teacher analyzes her teaching through a process of detailed review and recording of her own actions, productions, and those of her students. The community action researcher ensures that the process of generating, reviewing, and selecting which knowledge to represent is in the hands of the community in collaboration with the researcher. The artist follows the traditions of her art form to move from raw data, to phases of exploration, experimentation and finally selection and exhibition. While these processes connect together nicely in the enacting of collective photographic and community development exploration, they also result in several different stages and forms of data representation. It is for this reason that in the chapters to follow I open each with an overview of the analysis procedures that were employed in selecting and representing the content, and explain how different voices are forefronted at different points, so as to produce a complex representation of knowing and seeing. Following the *Description* section that presents several representations of the *Her Mind's Eye* community, I conclude with the *Discussion* chapter, wherein I have drawn upon the central themes that have emerged in order to discuss some of the key findings that have emerged from this study.

## PART III. DESCRIPTION

### *Introduction*

Part III, *Description*, is divided into four areas: the prelude, the making and structure of the group, an introduction to the group members, our weekly themes, and the exhibition. Together, they speak to the four central foci of my thesis, from the standpoint of the facilitator: the development of an SMPC; the use and usefulness of a Social Media Photography Community for women; women's experiences of the urban environment; and possible applications of social media in informal/community education.

### *Detailed overview of Description chapters*

Chapter 6, *Prelude to Her Mind's Eye: Exploring the underpinnings*, presents a description of my prior experience as a practitioner, community member and artist, and informs the skillsets and knowledge that I drew upon, which were instrumental in my capacity to create a working social media photography community. Although a similar description of researcher background is frequently present in the introduction to a thesis, I have chosen, rather, to focus on the heart of my inquiry in the introduction, and to provide a more detailed explanation that speaks to my qualifications here. Social media community facilitation is a relatively new area, with related studies emerging across fields. Chapters 6 and 7 focus on describing how one creates such a community. Chapter 6 begins by foregrounding/situating the creation of *Her Mind's Eye* within my praxes as a whole, such as my prior participation with SMPCs.

Chapter 7, *Making it! Designing the Her Mind's Eye* community online and “on the ground,” describes the naming of the group, visual design, selecting sites, recruitment, and special considerations taken around safety and security in social media-based research. Together with the preceding chapter of prelude, *Making it!* provides an overview of how an SMP community for women (and related research) was constructed.

Chapters 8-10, *#SaturdayInHerMind: Weekly thematic photography challenges*, explores the ideas and photographs that emerged through our weekly prompts, where group members took turns creating, based on questions about urban experience, personal interests and inspirations, and ideas for furthering the connectedness and growth of the *Her Mind's Eye* community. In this

section, each of our weekly thematic posters are shown, along with the images and comments created by the woman.

Chapter 11, #HMEExhibits: Creating an exhibition in the city, and exhibition catalogue, opens with a narrative of how the exhibition was developed; followed by the contents of the exhibition or “exhibition catalogue” which include: the exhibition statement, each of the women’s self-authored artist statements and short artist bios, and a photograph of their work installed in the gallery.

### *Analysis within the Description section*

There were many forms of data collected in this study, and questions asked ranged from concrete, structurally oriented questions about designing the community, to more interpretive questions, such as the ways in which the *Her Minds Eye* community and social media photography (SMP) were used by the women involved, and what aspects of urban life were represented through each woman’s photographs. Therefore, my ways of approaching the analysis of the following differently oriented sections both varies and overlaps. At the core of all analysis procedures is a continuous, deep and probing engagement with the data. Because this study gathered a large amount of data, a selection of this data is firstly organized and interpreted within the *Description* section. Less apparent are the processes of deep reading and the numerous initial stages of analysis that took place behind the scenes. These less-visible processes, and how they influenced these resulting findings are explained in the following discussions of analysis.

The *Making it!* section of the description follows a rather straight chronological narrative analysis (Butler-Kisber, 2010a) account of the stages and steps taken, sites established, and content produced in initiating the SMPC *Her Mind’s Eye*. It contains praxis-related headings identified through my ongoing records as practitioner (researcher and participant), and makes use of screenshots to represent these stages and actions.

Within the section *#SaturdayInHerMind*, I drew upon “the community as a unit of analysis” (Ozanne & Anderson, 2010) in building photo series based on emergent categories within the weekly themes that were generated by the participants/women of *Her Mind’s Eye* who participated in collaborative community methods, and arts-based research methods (Barone & Eisner, 1997, 2011) in developing their categories. I then further created sub-themes, by analyzing the photographic arts-based and social media data using a modified form of Constant

Comparison according to Maykut and Morehouse (1994), blended with arts-based/arts-informed research and a narrative account of the community's process and individuals' responses within it (Butler-Kisber, 2002). This analysis method for the section #SaturdayInHerMind relied on these weekly thematic headings decided on by the participants, with the resulting images and comments then being categorized using Maykut and Morehouse's (1994) rules of inclusion, and were further interpreted through reflection upon the photographs, comments, and through my knowledge and memories of the group members, as well as my own experience as a member and facilitator of the group. Finally, using the chronology of weekly thematic headings together with the sub-categories developed from modified constant comparison analysis and interpretation as a group facilitator following community action research, a narrative account was used to draw together participant themes and social media-based comments with focus group discussions, memories, and notes from our in-person meetings.

Finally, the *Exhibition* section presents the works that participants selected for public exhibition through each woman's personal review of her photographs, which were then interpreted, analyzed and situated by participants through their written artist statements. These are presented in the exhibition section "as is," and finally, implications are discussed within the *Discussion* section that follows the *Description*.

Because the chapters of this *Description* section (Part III) incorporate analysis stages that determine the information presented, influence the audience, and inform each section's mode of representation, these same analysis methods are also foundational to the *Discussion* chapters. The *Discussion* chapters further draw upon (in some cases see additional iterations) the content presented in various forms in the following *Description* section (part IV). Because of the unavoidable overlap, here I provide a more detailed overview of analysis processes foundational to the chapters presented within the *Description*, and their counterparts within *Discussion*. The first presentation of analysis addresses the construction and development of the *Her Mind's Eye*, or the making and managing of this SMPC for women. The second analysis overview builds on the first, showing analysis in relation to the two chapters within the *Description* section which explore both the weekly #SaturdayInHerMind themes, and the group's first *Exhibition*. The previous Analysis Process chapter within Part II describes in more detail how each of these processes and chapters are linked, and together, enable one to climb a ladder of analysis towards greater understanding.

***Overview of Analysis: Making and Managing Her Mind's Eye in the Description (Part III) and Discussion (Part IV) chapters.***

In generating the *Making it* chapter, I began by reviewing and organizing the logs and field notes that I kept, and then created a chronological representation (complete with thorough reflections) of the steps or actions that took place in constructing and managing the online and off-line components of the group, and how these then influenced or were responded to by the group. In addition to these logs and field notes, I kept notes collected through the frequent (approximately bi-weekly) meetings with my advisor. Through discussion with Dr. Szabad-Smyth, many of these significant issues were identified, and action plans for addressing them were developed during the active research portion of making and managing *Her Mind's Eye*. These meetings served as sites for the revisionary process of planning, acting and observing, reflecting and re-planning (Kemmis and McTaggart, p. 276, 2007), a spiraling development and inquiry model which is a common characteristics of most forms of action research, including community action research. In community-based action research, Stringer presents the process as look, think, and act, which all revolve around observing the circumstances taking place and actions of community members, evaluating and analyzing areas of success, weakness or other issues, and then taking action in trying to address or enact solutions for these problems. Close engagement of the researcher with the community enables the discovery of successes, process and other issues, not only as an external observer but also through ongoing communication with group members and awareness of collective and individual responses to actions and circumstances which, for *Her Mind's Eye*, took place both online and offline.

In addition to generating an organized record of these action steps, with focused accounts of their results and responses examined within Part IV, the *Discussion* section of *Making it*, I have gathered together significant themes that emerged surrounding issues that impacted, helped, or problematized the construction and maintenance of *Her Mind's Eye*. These core issues were gathered as they arose during the construction of the *Description*, and have been used as headings and content that informed this section. The other *Description* chapters following *Making it* were of further use in speaking to these significant points in the construction and management of the group, because of their focus in representing the varies of participants, drawn from our group meetings, comments within online photo exchanges and chats, and focus groups.

***Overview of Analysis: SMPCs, mobile photography and urban women and SMPCS in the Description (Part III) and Discussion (Part IV) chapters.***

Similar and overlapping modes of analysis were employed within the *Description* chapters, *#SaturdayInHerMind* and the *Exhibition*; and the associated *Discussion* sections: *Smpc's for women in urban settings*, and *Her Social/Mobile Photography*. These sections speak to the use and usefulness of SMPCs in urban settings for memory and women's visions for the city as developed through photographs that were taken across numerous sites at various times.

Beginning with the analysis that occurred as part of the cycle of action research, within the observe/think phase as described above. This observe/think phase of analyzing conditions as they happened took place in community, such as in-group meetings and in online spaces (on Instagram and Facebook), when we discussed the significance of our photographic productions and the responses that emerged from each weekly thematic prompt. These discussions and accompanying images were organized within the *#SaturdayInHerMind Description* section. This ties in with recognition of the community itself as a unit of analysis, wherein their development of the themes involved selecting/identifying themes of importance, towards goals of our community development, and for speaking to urban women's lives. In generating the *#SaturdayInHerMind* description sections, I took on the roles of researcher and facilitator by further searching for similarities in the content and approach of response to these *#SaturdayInHerMind* themes, which resulted in my sub-categorizing images and their associated comments and discussions, which I then followed with reflective interpretations. This was a secondary stage of analysis, which enabled me to further interpret these sub themes.

Next, their *Exhibition* photographs and artist statements served as further sites of analysis and interpretation by each woman of her own experience and image collections. Creating a series or selection of works for exhibition, and designing artist statements that reflect upon and explain aspects of the artist's thoughts around their work is a common arts-based method for distilling and representing meaning developed through visual inquiry methods. In this section the women each described her own purposes and in some cases, her own involvement in the group, as well as her selection, investigation and presentation of her photos dealing with her urban experience. By representing the individual voices present within community itself, complete with their complexities, this work also represents feminist goals of recognizing, maintaining, and promoting

women's voices, whether visual, spoken or written, and their statements. In her feminist dissertation research in a community art education environment with girls, Levy (2006) says, "For now, I would like to address the idea that voice is relational, connected to being heard or not. [...] I trusted what they said" (p. 183). Carrying this idea forward, I also trusted what they said, as well as how much they said and where and how they chose to say. I also trusted what they presented in their collective themes and exhibition as being that which should be represented. Lastly, I recognize that one woman's thematic choice or exhibition selection is not likely to represent all of the women present, and that this multiplicity of voices is important, and particularly in the areas where I have engaged with ordering or interpretation of it, I am only able to present portions of it through my own lens, to the best of my understanding, and with my personal limitations that can serve as blind spots to miss important discoveries, that perhaps are not in this dissertation space, ever meant to be found.

## CHAPTER 6. Prelude to *Her Mind's Eye*: Exploring the underpinnings

### *The significance of background and context*

This section presents the previously existing conditions that were foundational to my process of designing the mobile photography community, *Her Mind's Eye*. As such, it informs the question of how to create an informal education and collaborative mobile photography community for women, by describing the key features that were instrumental to *Her Mind's Eye* coming into being. Not intending to reiterate *research design*, presented previously, this section highlights the ways in which research design came to define the initial form and foundations of the community itself. This influence can be seen in the composition of the group members, and in the community's degree of openness and accessibility to outsiders (as this relates to privacy and confidentiality). As a result of these efforts, *Her Mind's Eye* developed some unique features, infrequently seen within SMP communities. This chapter also presents aspects of my prior experience as a teacher, community leader, social media photography community member and participatory researcher that had direct implications in the development of this group.

### *Foundations for community design: Participant, researcher, artist, educator*

In addressing the question of how to create a mobile photography community, it is important again to acknowledge that the beginning of this project was not in actuality “the beginning.” It sprouted from the soil of pre-existing conditions. I mention this because when it comes to Internet-based initiatives and social media, I have seen a tendency in the general public towards the belief that they are “easy,” and that lesser skill, experience, and training is required. However, consideration of the success of the social media community Facebook, and the knowledge and aptitude required to develop it could unsettle this idea. Although it is true that the barrier to entry for those who desire to try making an online community is low, the success is related to the many competencies present--both those of the members, and of the leaders/facilitators.

The decision to create *Her Mind's Eye* came at a point in my career, location and life experience, wherein numerous practices, influences and experiences culminated. *Her Mind's Eye* came from my existing practice and passion for education, community arts, and creative communication through technologies. These earlier seeds and countless iterations of participatory community artwork, particularly through the use of Facebook, intersected with my skills as

teacher, designer, artist, collaborator/facilitator, tech-savvy woman, adventurer, and “on foot,” “online” community organizer.

I have long been passionate about urban community-building and accessible art. In addition to my teaching background, the prior experiences that I brought to the design of *Her Mind's Eye* included creating and participating in alternative and free open arts/creative communities, such as the online space *Deviant Art* ([www.deviantart.com](http://www.deviantart.com)), and creating local physical art studios and collectives in BC and Quebec. All of these informal learning experiences helped teach me, through trial and error, some of what works and doesn't work both in online spaces and with urban women's informal art education communities. Having struggled at one point to create a home-based informal women's art group, I learned about the difficulties of establishing a women's creative community due to the time constraints and multiple responsibilities that women faced, which inhibited their attendance. This was despite the impassioned, common desire amongst the women to activate their art practices, and their attempts to continue making art, despite a lack of available resources and accessible, supportive environments in which to do so.

Furthermore, my experience in creating collaborative artworks, which invited public participation in the production of content/media, and often invited collaboration from other local artists, was useful to me. It provided me with experience working closely on a project with other artists, and across university and community settings. Lastly, my knowledge/experience with photography and teaching (education), and my on-going participation and commitment in similar SMP communities heavily influenced my vision and creation of *Her Mind's Eye*.

Notably, this project was heavily influenced by my active membership in the SMP community of ITERS Montreal. ITERS Montreal was already well established and accomplished, and led at the time led by Hind Akhiyat. Through Instagramers Montreal, Hind and I met and became friends. Having interviewed Hind for a pilot study in my doctoral seminar, wherein I tried to identify key features of SMP communities, I asked Hind if she would mentor me in this project. She had already enthusiastically offered repeatedly to advise me anytime, and made herself readily available to meet with me in person or on Skype. Hind had done extensive personal investigations into social media photography and community leadership globally, and we shared our mutual passion for mobile photography and democratic creative community building. Hind's participatory and community-centered leadership of ITERS Montreal became a

guiding light for my vision of our *Her Mind's Eye*. My participation in IGERS Montreal furthered my desire to open new avenues and spaces for emerging women in mobile photography to exhibit and share, and be supported in developing their work. Additional interviews conducted at the outset of this research, which influenced my understanding of the values central to successful SMP communities, included an interview with @girloclock, leader of Instagramers Vancouver, and @enzo, of Instagramers Japan. The second pilot study, which looked at social media photography as art and research, is described further within the analysis section.

Shortly before initiating *Her Mind's Eye*, I brought some of these practices together by trying my hand at organizing a mobile photography meet-up, as part of Instagramers Montreal; linking it with the NDG arts walk, an annual community street-art and performance festival taking place in the NDG neighbourhood of Montreal each summer. Through this experience, I got a taste of cross-application event promotion (in this case, on Instagram and Facebook), creating graphics or digital posters to promote the event, and linking content through hashtags, as well as reaching out to community members. In fact, one attendee of this event later joined *Her Mind's Eye*.

Even before I began trying to formally create the *Her Mind's Eye* mobile photography community, I engaged in personal investigations, over one year of SMP art production, followed by preliminary “tests” or pilot projects, in order to understand what was so special about successful SMP communities. In these activities, I tried out some of the techniques which would later become instrumental to the development of *Her Mind's Eye*, and answered additional questions that I had about how to design such a community, and how I could do so in the context of research. Although I present an outline here of some of the key steps I have taken, it can only serve as an inspiration for incorporating existing experience as a practitioner, participant, collaborator, and art producer into community organizing in on and offline environments. Like teaching, SMP community leadership is best learned through practice, by drawing upon one's best abilities, collaborating democratically, and listening to good advice. Sometimes, we need a place to start. As Hind told me: just dive in!

***Capturing smoke: The influence of research on community design.***

Creating a mobile photography community under the umbrella of the academy and its institutional framework had a strong impact on my design of the mobile photography community.

The scope of this influence is difficult to determine, there are both benefits and drawbacks, therefore I hope to paint a colourful picture, rather than a black-and-white one. I began by acknowledging that it is necessarily a community-university research project, and as such, can and should not be seen as purely a community arts endeavour. The influence of the research component can be seen right across the gamut of the study. It spans: Who (participated/was recruited); What (the focus of the group was); Where (the group took place); When (the group was active); Why (the group was created, why various decisions were made, and other ‘whys’); and How (all of the above were enacted). Here, I present the creation of the community in conjunction with the influence of research and the Academy, primarily the ethics process. While most mobile photography or social media communities are developed purely within the public sphere, *Her Mind’s Eye* was constructed under the umbrella of the university. As such, it was subject to rules and requirements, departmental research norms, and the traditional forms of the academic system (or structural influence of the academy).

In completing my summary protocol form (the application for the project’s ethical certification), I needed to provide a clear structure of what I originally envisioned as an inductive, collaborative, changing community. Originally, I struggled with this, feeling stuck within the contradiction. In designing the study, envisioning, and creating *Her Mind’s Eye*, I struggled to reconcile these practical requirements of research and my needs as a doctoral student with the philosophy I was developing around power-sharing and leadership in social media art education. During this time, I began referring to my role in *Her Mind’s Eye* as “facilitator.”

I struggled between how to give a structure (albeit a loose one) to something that I would not create alone (as I envisioned that we would design it as a community), and to provide relatively clear beginning, middle and end points, required both by the research forms, and by busy woman with complex lives. Within the proposal ethics and consent forms I developed, (as was required), a vision of my philosophy for research design emerged, which was closely coupled with my philosophy for the social media photography community group itself. The need to clarify strengthened my understanding of my goals and visions, and helped me to accept the complexity of my roles. While attempting to maintain a collaborative framework wherein participants would co-design the features and format of the group, I recognized that ethics and recruitment also required me to clearly define to some degree: what I was trying to do, when I would do it, how I would do it, and with whom. Although I strove to keep these categories as

open as possible (stating for example that the number of our in-person meetings would depend on the group's decisions), I felt that other issues (such as the duration of the study) needed clarity. To ask participants to engage in a study of indeterminate length and focus was unreasonable. Particularly of note, in developing the recruitment notice, I recognized that certain characteristics for the group and benefits to the SMP community members needed to be detailed enough both to appease ethics, and adequately inform participants of what to expect, as well as to appeal to women who would be devoting their time, focus and energies to the group. At the same time, I tried to envision how, as the group facilitator, I could navigate what felt like an incongruity between providing clarity and common points of interest, while creating a framework that had space for collaboration, collective design, transition and the unknown.

The framework I established which was the incorporation of online and social media technologies with research, further influenced the framework I established, as I worried a lot about gaining ethical approval from the university. With several issues and approaches that were at the borders of traditional research (participatory design, online data collection, mobile devices, and social media companies), I worked hard to create a solid and comprehensive ethics application that clearly outlined the group and, especially the online locations of the research. In our focus group, one participant mentioned how useful she found the detailed consent form to be. I thanked her and explained my struggle in creating it.

While the pre-defined locations placed constraints on the group's freedom to select virtual sites, the possibility of revising the ethics and consent forms was available, should members have decided together to change the social media applications used by our group. That being said, our reality was one of continuous activity. *Her Mind's Eye* was on a roll and picking up speed, as individuals posted photos daily, learned and established tags and techniques to ensure virtual connection, and regularly met in person. We also developed plans for forthcoming activities, in order to build enthusiasm and support our collective progress. This un-pausing nature of *Her Mind's Eye* (likely shared by other active social media and arts communities), meant that certain features from the ethics form very quickly became community form; for example, my choice of using Instagram and Facebook as our online venues, coupled with the ethics structure, determined the online spaces where our group would meet. An example of this, was that during the opening week or two of our project, there had been discussion and interest in using alternative social media photography applications, in particular, EyeEm, which claimed no ownership of

participant generated content. Not only was I faced with a personal time limit, but many of the group members had time limits as well, and were eager to make progress. They quickly decided to stay with the initial sites presented in the consent form. Although the ethical process has room for adjustments, the reality is that revisions were known to take weeks, and creating, distributing and collecting revised consent forms can take several additional weeks.

Initially, it took me approximately 2-3 weeks with enthusiastic reminders to participants in order to distribute and collect all consent forms from the members wanting to participate. Because it was a community project and included the requirement of a workshop on safety, etcetera, I felt that we should not begin with many members missing the introduction, therefore we had to wait until the majority of forms were returned. In this additional way, the “research” aspect of our community had a strong presence in its initialization, and the resulting community form.

Prior to the start of the study, several very interested potential participants dropped out, due primarily to the requirement to sign the ethics form. One woman expressed her discomfort with providing signed consent for policies of Instagram and Facebook, detailed in the form, despite the fact that by already having used these applications, she had already expressed her consent to these companies.

On the brighter side, the Summary Protocol and Consent forms might have been a major catalyst for *Her Mind's Eye* beginning to take on a “solid” form, by serving as a basic framework for the initiation of a mobile photography community that, although different from a community developed outside of the academy, was unique and posed as a new model for reimagining social media communities in the context of informal, semi-formal or *e-arts* education. The ethics application required me to create boundaries, such as time, participation expectations, and clear understanding of risks and benefits. In other words, shared expectations and the level of transparency, which traditional social media communities do not usually have. Through the completion of the summary protocol form, I realized the organizational framework for *Her Mind's Eye*. Although I didn't fully realize it at the time, the consent form served as a guidepost both for myself and for the community, ensuring that we were all on the same “page,” with our mutual understanding signed and in writing. The consent form, and the overarching ‘doctoral study’ also imbued our community with gravity and significance, strengthening the commitment

of members (and myself), factors which might have been difficult to achieve in a grassroots community development project.

After much effort, the research design and ethics forms came to represent the heart and overall spirit of what I was going to be doing—something that was allowed to be changed—in which I demonstrated the foundational social media photography community philosophy and ethics, including the spirit of participation, ongoing negotiated consent, co-construction of the group, and continuous sharing of progress and plans with group members. I recall another example coming from Concordia, where the coming together of an inspired art teacher, a community activist, and a community action research program served as the catalysts to the formation of a long-lasting successful community program called L.O.V.E. (Chase, 2008.) Indeed, Stan Chase was an influencer of mine, as I worked alongside him as a teacher’s assistant, and in the community, and came to recognize the positive impact of producing community-university research.

Lastly, the research design and consent forms may have influenced who came to join the group, as all group members were highly interested in the concept of a woman-only community, the overarching topic of exploring their urban life experiences, and developing photographic and social media skills and community. The women who came to form the members of *Her Mind’s Eye* were for the most part like-minded or unified in our participation and goals, in the structure of leadership and participation (I was seen as the primary group designer and leader), and the content of media production (which was geared towards personal life experiences). That being said, the women who joined still were rather diverse in terms of backgrounds, cultures, ages, location, and careers, to name a few traits.

***Struggling to start up: Fear, big decisions, and an experienced mentor***

Other aspects of early stage community development included the creation of a group name, designing of digital spaces and graphics creation, choosing online “sites” where the group would meet as well as physical meeting locations. These choices and others are discussed at length in the following chapter, *Making It*. With the help of Hind and Instagramers Japan, I had recognized the importance of beginning with a clear overarching community definition that participants could quickly engage in. This includes a structure that allows room for participants to adjust it to their own interests and needs. Such a structure would include tagging practices following

commonly accepted forms and principles (recognizable tags and derivative tags). Our primary tag was #hermindseye. It also included the construction of communication spaces (on Instagram and Facebook). This way, the group's general social conventions around acceptable modes of interaction could be easily understood, i.e., who was allowed to post what, and where? Other initial decisions, mentioned previously in regards to ethics, also were important for the functioning and comfort of community. I also had to decide on a general schedule for the group: how often we would meet in person (bi-monthly or weekly)?

All of these issues took me quite some time to consider prior to the start of the group. I was concerned that if I started off badly, I might lose the women's confidence, since the area of informal arts education in on and offline social media platforms was very new and already my method was quite open-ended. One example of my difficulty with preliminary decision-making was my effort to determine a starting date. In my life, I was moving between physical locations quite a bit. Thus, I was unsure how my location would influence the group, and afraid to begin. In order to address this, I ended up consulting with Hind who provided a wealth of information not only from her own experience but also through her observations and knowledge about how other mobile photography groups were run. I spoke with her over Skype from Vancouver, asking about this question and others that I had, and she told me in no uncertain terms that generally, a mobile photography community could be organized from any location. One example she provided was of a leader in Alberta who also ran a mobile photography community in Mexico. As a friend and fellow SMP community enthusiast, Hind emboldened me, saying that what was *really* needed to create a mobile photography community was to just go ahead and do it. Go for it! Do it! She told me. With her encouragement, I recognized that I had done enough research, and with my many unanswered questions in my pocket, it was time to make some decisions. Her counseling helped me to see that what was slowing me down in part was the fear of making a mistake, of losing people, of having a bad start. Despite all my experience as a teacher and artist, and my prior investigations, I was once again facing fear of the unknown. Although it wasn't something I was consciously aware of at first, I was afraid of looking stupid or losing face. Having a SMP community leader who knew me well, who had guided and advised me, express confidence in me and tell me that it was time to get moving, helped me realize that I really needed to do so. It was time to worry less about troubleshooting every issue I could imagine before it happened. I had to begin with advertising something that people could connect with, and

would be willing and wanting to invest their time, emotions, and energy into, particularly as what I was proposing was new and unfamiliar, unlike a traditional community art form such as a weekend watercolour painting.

### ***Summary***

Together, the initial conditions of my prior experiences as a practitioner, my artistic practices, pilot studies, research needs, and active participation in other social media photography communities all came to form the recipe which would define what type of community *Her Mind's Eye* would become. But much like an old family recipe, the exact details, procedures, and measurements for the creation of *Her Mind's Eye* were to be discovered through practice, and a sense of knowing what the final look and taste might be, together with the advice and input from knowledgeable others, and those who would be sharing in the final product.

## CHAPTER 7. Making it!

### Designing the *Her Mind's Eye* online and “on the ground”

This chapter provided the nuts and bolts (or flour and butter) of how I established *Her Mind's Eye*. It begins with, *What's in a name*, a look at the ideas that formed the foundation of the community prior to its start, beginning with deciding on a name for the group, foundational and introductory group statements in the context of research and existing SMPC norms, and my reasoning behind these decisions. Next, *First steps: Design and establishing online spaces*, briefly presents how I set up the accounts and selected the various applications where our group interacts on Facebook, Instagram, Gmail, and a (unsuccessful) blog. There is some discussion about the features of these various spaces, and why they were selected, as well as special techniques used, such as hashtags and direct messaging, for organizing and sharing content. This section also shows the visual design of community spaces and logo development that took place.

*Inviting group members (and recruitment)* discusses the various ways and places through which I sought out group members. This section also includes a brief overview of the size and composition of the group, though details of the list of individual members is presented in the opening to the dissertation (VIPS) significant individuals, and within their self-authored bios in Chapter 10, exhibitions. It also briefly discusses why the city locations of Montreal and Vancouver were selected, and how this was possible.

*Safety workshop: Negotiating the private, public, and popular* focuses on our introductory session, a mandatory privacy and safety workshop, and some of the reactions and questions of group members. *Meet-ups and photo-walks* then provides a brief background to online facilitated, location-based art community group gatherings and SMPCS. It then explains our group process of organizing meet-ups, and how and where our on foot/physical group meetings took place, briefly describing the topics and activities covered. Lastly, *Digital community across places and spaces* returns to discuss the sites of Instagram and Facebook briefly, as they were used by the group, and notably, as sites of co-learning, creating and community. Once again, this is explained in greater detail through the descriptive themes narrative chapter to follow. Together, these sections offer an overview of how the group was created, including the structure of the group, and fundamental activities that took place within the group. A fuller explanation of how our group functioned and was conducted online and in person, can be found in the narrative

account of our group's engagement with the #SaturdayInHerMind weekly themes, in Chapters 8 through 10.

### **Ongoing analysis and rich representations of relational and arts-based data**

The development of weekly #*SaturdayInHerMind* themes involved both the group's collective investigation and selection of categories, (a form of arts-based analysis), while it also served as a process of focused data collection. This is in keeping with the spiraling nature of the action research method, wherein ongoing analysis continuously takes place while new actions are taken and new developments made from those observations by the community. As a form of arts-based analysis, these weekly group themes emerged within the women's individual lives, through each woman's ongoing photographic practices, through discussions online in written or visual form, and they emerged from within our collective photographic inquiries, meetings, and discussions. The creation of photographs to address these themes can then be seen as either a generation of photographic data, or a phase of representation and interpretation of findings that were already being investigated within their independent practices.

I believe that in this manner, collaborative development, online representations, social media photographs and art do a very good job to lift the somewhat artificial veil that perhaps exists at times between data and analysis. Surely over time, researchers have traditionally presented information in a didactic and organized manner that perhaps may have already been organized and represented in different, effective and affective forms.

### ***What's in a name? A foundation for building online spaces and recruitment***

Through the character of Juliet, Shakespeare once asked: *What's in a name?* But does the declaration hold true? Does a rose by any other name really smell as sweet? Certainly, the power of names was well understood by Shakespeare, whose capable mastery of words was to serve as the inspiration for our group's name. In order for me to be able to find individuals who were interested in participating in this social media photography community in a timely manner, and to appeal to a broad audience, it was important to present an invitation that was both clear and aesthetically appealing. In addition to my keeping with SMPC standards set by existing SMP communities (such as design sense, and maintaining an approachable and professional online atmosphere, like that of a business or media organization), I felt it was especially important to

sell my case because I was in new and unfamiliar territory. Once the group had a name, I could begin creating spaces, recruiting, and more, which would be much easier if we were already unified under a single name. My first task, then, seemed easy enough!

Deciding on a name proved daunting. It took me over a month to do so. I looked to IGERSmontreal for an example, spoke to Hind for advice, and to a friend of mine who was a writer. The name had to be available in applications, and able to represent all of us in a group that was yet to be formed. It had to be easy to remember, read, and quick/easy to type as a hashtag, i.e. #HerMindsEye. It shouldn't sound too serious, or silly. Ideally, it had to be something that could be built on, such as through an acronym or play on words, for the development of future hashtags, and should avoid any adverse outcome. One particularly unfortunate acronym from an otherwise promising group name came from Women In Mobile Photography... WIMP! I went back to the drawing board. It turned out that choosing a name was akin to determining a personality for the group.

To begin the group, it was necessary to first create Facebook and Instagram accounts (which also required a group name). As the Facebook group page and account would also serve as access points for connecting to interested, potential group members, I wanted to complete these prior to starting the group. Once these accounts were created and hashtags were available, individuals could then quickly join, and jump right into posting and sharing content. To minimize confusion and the unnecessary spread of data and postings, the name needed to be something that could stick. I didn't want to find myself in the position of trying to get everyone connected to the community then making a switch. If I had to switch the name, I would then have to try to get everyone to re-name their content, and change the accounts they were following. This would make things even more complicated at the outset of the group, especially for the many group members who were new to Instagram and social media communities. Also, were I to change the group's name, I would then have to find a way to keep a clear, organized record of the movement of data on multiple accounts, both for my research and for the community.

The name of the group, *Her Mind's Eye*, emerged as a variant of the phrase "in my mind's eye," originally coined by Shakespeare and spoken by the character of Hamlet. After his father passed away, Hamlet recalled his father in his mind with such vividness, it was as if he was truly face-to-face with him. This vivid vision was bred by his longings and questions. *Her Mind's Eye*, then, refers to our imagination, feelings, dreams, memories, desires, and mental visions. It

represents the experiences of thought and inner-sight, which, while based in one's physical reality and experiences are also intermediary objects of the mind, and are therefore, are both real and created. I further intended it to symbolize the practice of composing a photograph: combining our interaction with (and experiences of processing) our surroundings, our personal philosophies and visions of the world, and our momentary mental thoughts or musings, all of which intersect to create a photograph, and contribute to our sense of place and of self. *Her Mind's Eye* represents the give-and-take between our selves, our mental and our physical vision, and the camera's eye. Because of an inactive account on Instagram already using the username @hermindseye, our group's Instagram account name is @inhermindseye, although the shortened tag *hermindseye* is still used, and the group's official name has stayed *Her Mind's Eye*.

In defining the group's name and providing an overview of our objectives, my hope was that my description of "women's experiences of urban life" was a general enough topic to be approached and interpreted widely by a range of people. What is women's experience of the urban environment? Since we were all women, and we all lived in or near the city, it seemed anything was possible! This broad stroke definition, I hoped, would loosely say "us" and allowed for flexibility. Despite the difficulties that changing names might cause, if the women wanted to, I imagined that in the future, we could collectively decide upon a new group name or our group goals. I additionally wrote a small statement of purpose describing the group. It was present in recruitment notices, on initial Instagram posts, and also on our Facebook communities. I felt that this statement was a placeholder of sorts, which would be changed and adapted as needed.

***First steps: Creating accounts, setting up online spaces and visual design***

I began by envisioning creating online spaces where *Her Mind's Eye* could *live*, on Instagram and Facebook, and additionally communication through e-mail and a blog. Next came the business of securing an Instagram account, Gmail accounts, setting up a Facebook group, and maybe a website. The website was quickly abandoned, so I'm not presenting it here. Instagram was selected because of its popularity and usability, and because I was already active on Instagram, as were several of the incoming members. A Facebook group afforded us a space where we could communicate conversationally through typing within a closed community. One of the required features in creating each of these accounts was the need for a visual image to help define the group. The recruitment notice to be posted on Instagram needed an accompanying image.

For the notice posted on Facebook, I wanted to have eye-catching visuals representing Montreal and Vancouver, and the Instagram account needed an avatar, an image that represents the user or account. Then in Boston, sitting in the Harvard library and spurred on to follow Hind's advice to 'go for it' regardless of my location, with a name for the group at hand, I wanted to quickly create the accounts and begin recruiting. With the spirit of mobile creation inspiring me, I put a macro lens on my iPhone and managed to snap a macro photo of my eye with a computer reflected inside, using my computer's camera/screen to show me the image on my iPhone screen.



In designing the logo I tried combining the eye with technology. The eye was a simple reference to the group's title; while drawing on the visual similarity between an eye and camera lens (an icon design often used for photography apps), and the concept of the eye as window to the soul. The laptop reflected within the eye suggests that technology represents how we are able to connect portions of our vision and soul online through artistic and photographic sharing.

*Figure 2. Evolving logo design.*

The original blue/purple hues were intended to add a surreal, dream-like effect, reflective of both the inner-workings of the mind, and the 'neon glow' of city life, in addition to the functional role of blending together the Montreal and Vancouver photos in the assemblage. Later I decided that the original image carried too much of a psychedelic, romantic, sad, or Victorian atmosphere, which hadn't properly represented the diversity of a multi-city photography community. The final image pictured here seeks to convey the group's purpose, while maintaining the central concept of the eye/lens as window to the soul, and as a means for digitally communicating and connecting online through photographs.



Figure 3. Final Her Mind's Eye community poster/logo design

***Building community through connections and calls: Facebook, friends, posters and Instagram (also: Recruitment cont.)***

Like the many aspects of teaching and research that overlap in action research, the design of the community and the design of the research are integrally interconnected. Because this is an extremely important aspect of how the community itself was formed, and arguably, who we came to be, I have decided to present the recruitment process as an aspect of building the community. Although many social media photography communities appear to emerge innately, using purely social media-based engagement, this may not be the case. In several other SMPCs that I have encountered, many of the core members of SMPCs appear to have earlier associations, through friendships and on-the-ground professional contacts. Similarly, location-based social media photography communities frequently have collaborating organizers and community leaders who are friends, or whom they've met through in-person meet-ups. That being said, a clear recruitment notice and invitation to participate in a closed social media photography community seemed to break the format of most existing SMPCs. This places *Her Mind's Eye* somewhere between (and within, simultaneously) a completely community-based, free artists' collective, a participatory arts-based research project, and an online social media-based classroom environment.

“Who” accessed the invitation to the project influenced the community that formed. Group member recruitment took place through my posting recruitment notices to reach my personal network of colleagues, contacts, family and friends on the “wall” of my personal Facebook page, and to my extended Facebook network, as can be seen with the CSEA post discussed below. Additionally, I invited participation on Instagram, by posting an image and invitation to on my existing Instagram account. On this post, I tagged some individuals whom I had connected to through Instagram, and thought might be interested in the project, in order to

draw their attention to the post. Posts can quickly disappear in a never-ending “feed” of new images being uploaded by one’s Instagram contacts. Lastly, I invited group members through physical posting of recruitment posters/notices both in the Fine Arts sections of Concordia University and in local cafés. Once members expressed their interest in the group, I provided them with the detailed consent form to review, and to confirm or decline participation. The women who came to join the group are presented individually in the exhibition catalogue, and a list of the group members and other VIPs can be found in the appendix.

On Facebook, recruitment notices were posted in art education groups, community groups, and on my private account. For example, I posted an invitation and information about the group on the Facebook group for the CSEA, the Canadian Society for Education through Art. To begin with, I wanted to make the group accessible to any woman who would like to join, regardless of her pre-existing abilities, such as level of expertise in photography, art education or other background. The conditions for joining were that members would participate in the group online, attend in-person meet-ups (if able), show interest in mobile photography, be female (or, more broadly, identify with the group’s vision to show women’s views of the city), be over 18, have her own technology, and be located in Canada (ideally, Montreal or Vancouver). In searching for individuals who might want to engage with this online arts space; whom may have interest, but in some cases, might lack experience in social media photography particularly as an art form and learning space, I thought about members of the Canadian art education community. There were four likes (where many posts were averaging one to three likes), as well as two individuals who expressed their interest, and commented with questions about participation. Susan, a teacher in Toronto who “liked” the post, contacted me directly to join the group, while Marie France, a PhD student from UBC Art Education, contacted me directly through a Facebook message, and soon after, joined the group.

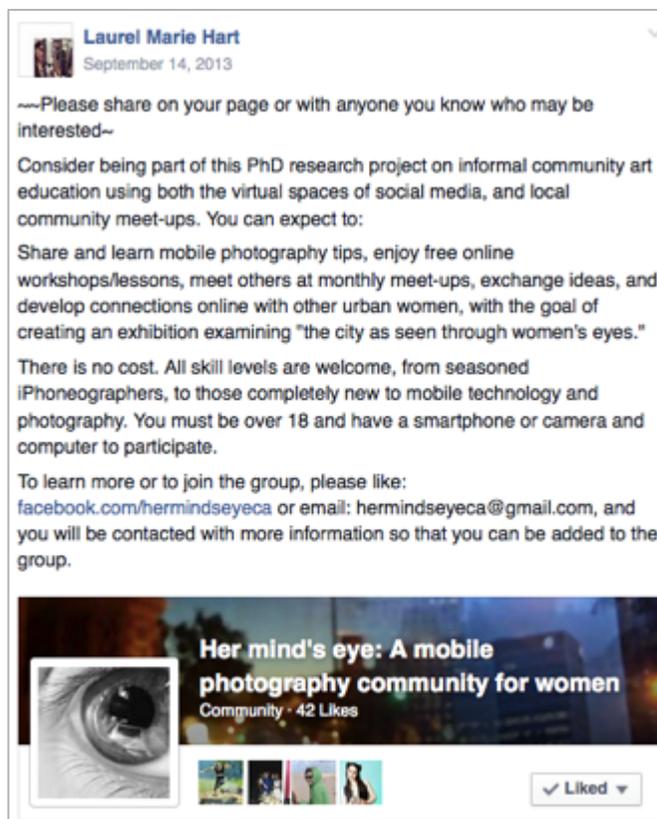


Figure 4. Recruitment notice posted on CSEA page posted on CSEA page

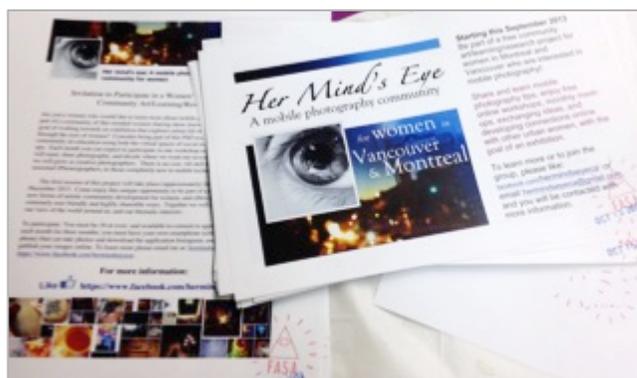


Figure 5. Recruitment notices – posted around Montreal

The resulting group of women was a mix of those who were new to photography, the arts, and social media, and others who had training or independent experience. They came to the group each via different recruitment spaces: posts to my Facebook account, campus posters, Instagram posts, and word of mouth. Although I posted recruitment notices in spaces that were not focused

towards student audiences, mobile photographers, or artists (primarily in Montreal cafés), I did not receive any responses from those notices.

### *Size of the group(s)*

How many people were in *Her Mind's Eye*? Because of the research component of the project, I decided with my dissertation committee that for practicality's sake, the number had to be low and manageable, so that I would not become overwhelmed with data. In this aspect, the research design had a great impact on the community design. This is very different than the goal of most social media communities, which is to get as many followers as possible. In total, we were 18 group members. The *Her Mind's Eye*'s community in Montreal consisted of twelve women (myself included), while the Vancouver community had five members, and there was one independent member in Toronto.

### ***Safety workshop: Negotiating the private, public, and popular***

A concise presentation of the issue of safety and how it was addressed was provided in the consent form and later followed out in these groups. To understand how group members were introduced to safety measures at the start of the program, here is a quote from the consent form that was, in essence, their first engagement with *Her Mind's Eye* as a community. Perhaps this form, required by research, came to serve as, “consent form as education,” or the informal groundwork and associated recommendations of practice that were foundational to the *Her Mind's Eye* community that formed.

These risks will be addressed during workshops at the start of the program, in which guidelines for safety, ethics, and self-protection will be provided that include: how to remove geo-location data from photos, how much information individuals might want to reveal, and how self representation can have professional implications, (using examples of teacher's codes of ethics and highlighting the fact that their photos will be publically viewable.) Overall, mobile photographers on Instagram already exhibit care in choosing what to share, and take careful measures to maintain their privacy and safety. Participants will be encouraged to only share photographs that they are comfortable with anyone seeing, those where individuals are not identifiable (or written consent is obtained), and will be reminded of the irrevocable nature of publishing on the internet.

Our first informal introductory meeting, which took place even prior to the required privacy workshop, delved quickly into the issue of privacy. In discussing questions about GPS

data recorded by their phone and on Instagram, different women put forward their knowledge and recent news discoveries, most of which had been gleaned from social media. For example--a post shared by a friend on Facebook. Many of the women were already mulling over these topics, having read the consent forms in detail previously, and were excited to have some solid information on the rules and regulations of Instagram and Facebook. This information, despite its availability, was not easily accessed or highlighted to them as social media users. They were excited to ask questions.

During this meeting, (and earlier, through consent forms), the women of *Her Mind's Eye* were reminded that on Instagram they were likely publically identifiable both through their handle (their specialized Instagram name) and/or their real name, a point that was emphasized repeatedly. For this reason, many waited to set up their accounts until our meeting, so they could ask what various settings would do, and how they might change settings both within Instagram and also within their smartphone's settings regarding the data that is recorded with each photo.

The privacy information provided in the consent forms included knowledge that their photos would be stored on American servers, and as such, were subject to the Patriot Act (Carlos Castro, personal communication, 2013), and that all the information they entered--from photos to tags and geographic data--would be accessible (with varying degrees of "ease") to people and companies online, and that the nature of social networking allows for the possibility of receiving unwanted feedback. They were also informed of the ability to set their account to private, rendering their content 'easily' viewable by group members only. They could choose pseudonyms on Instagram. Much fun was had as the women thought about their Instagram names or handles. Of course, there was the inevitable initial frustration, as they found that desired names were unavailable.

During this presentation and subsequent meetings (or individual discussion following personal inquiries from participants), group members were shown how to adjust settings and features related to meta data that collect this information. Furthermore, within the group, participants were encouraged to exchange their own thoughts, questions, and findings around issues of privacy, identity, security, and personal rights. A culture of collective inquiry into issues such as privacy, safety, and corporate/advertising evolved, where participants posted content within our closed Facebook group.

Within group sessions and on Facebook, we discussed what “online identity” means, and how it can be searched for and accessed by potential employers and even romantic partners (Becerra, 2013). I additionally created a password-protected blog, which contained the mandatory “introduction to safety issues” course. Following this Facebook post, one of the group members who was studying Law at the time posted a link to the movie “Terms and Conditions May Apply,” for more information.

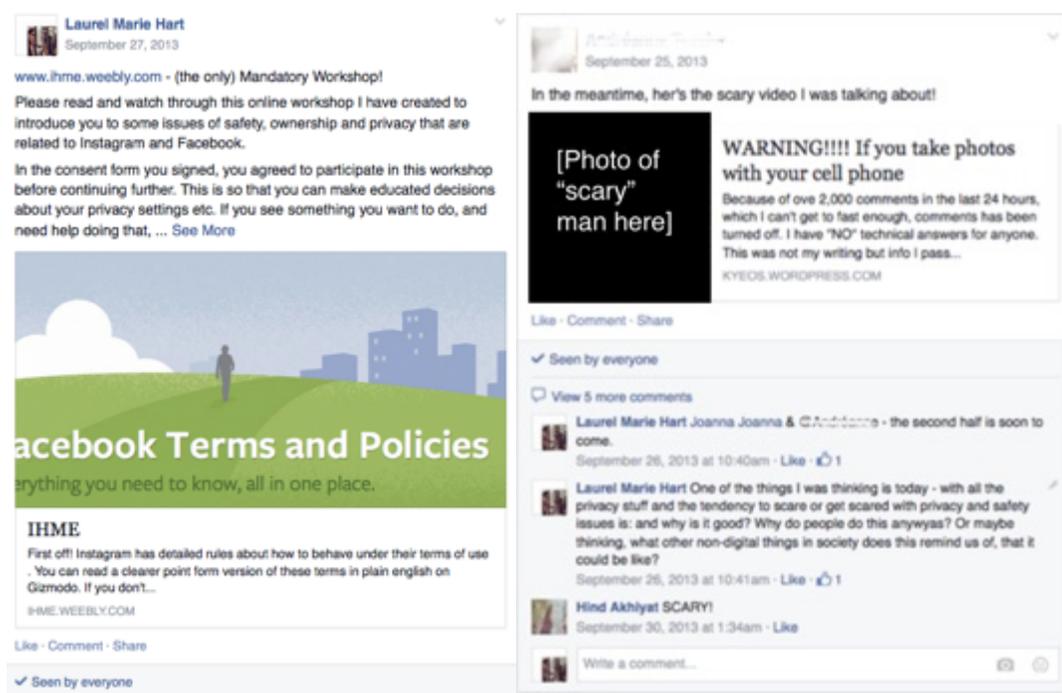


Figure. 6 Safety/Security posts within the Facebook group.

The women were encouraged to similarly decide on their involvement with both Instagram and Facebook, or could share their images and communicate through alternate means (within one platform or the other), to receive updates through email, or to attend in-person meetings only. The option of using alternate social media applications was also raised and dismissed by the group. While some participants began by opting out of Facebook or posting minimum content on Instagram, ultimately these participants often opted in or found themselves further separated from the collective consciousness of the group, receiving information and updates after the fact. Two participants found the use of Instagram to be difficult due to their technological limitations and other personal reasons. Alternately, other women sought out greater distribution of their images, which included personal data such as location information,

and developed their own means of creating safety measures. For more understanding of social privacy practices, such as delayed posting of images see Frith (2013) and for circumventing censorship see Olszanowski (2014). One participant addressed her concerns about Facebook involvement by creating a unique, independent Facebook account that she used only for the purpose of this group, as she had recently chosen to minimize her Facebook involvement within her daily life. Ultimately, however, during this program, she decided to re-activate her old personal Facebook account and incorporated this within *Her Minds Eye* as well.

At the same time as posting this necessary legal knowledge, I was trying to add enthusiasm and anticipation to the community atmosphere at our outset. The good news is that I wasn't alone in this. Perhaps our collective excitement to discover the "scandal" of social media policy, and our shared surprise of awakening to the little-understood issue of privacy and data, was a great way for us to bond at the start-up of our community!

### ***Meet-ups, photo walks, and local SMPC predecessors***

*SMPC predecessors: Inspired by Instagramers, and Her Mind's Eye's photo walks*

*Her Mind's Eye* built on the existing format prevalent within Social Media Photography Communities, notably the Instagramers communities started by Philip Gonzalez in 2011 (<http://instagramers.com/about/>). The Instagramers communities are, as they sound, groups of individuals who identify themselves as (active) Instagram users. More specifically, Instagramers is comprised of numerous (over 400) regionally specific communities, that each have their own local leadership, unique social media accounts (such as @igersmontreal), and host in-person gatherings, which usually take the form of photo walks or meet-ups. According to Hind, the accounts which Instagramers community leaders are recommended to create include Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)), MeetUp ([www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com)) and Instagram (<https://itunes.apple.com/EN/app/instagram/id389801252?mt=8>). These accounts are used as a point for local Instagramers to find and connect to the group, to distribute information, and to organize gatherings. Meet-ups/photo walks are events where users meet together at a single location and take a walk together through the city, usually on an attractive, pre-designated route. Many of these meet-ups end at a café or restaurant for a festive time of getting to know others in person, while reviewing/uploading photos taken during the walk to Instagram, and simultaneously visiting/viewing other users' online accounts; in other words, connecting individuals' digital

personas with their online identities and photographic creations.

Our group followed a similar structure to that of Instagramers Montreal, but with some key differences. In addition to not having a [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com) account, our Facebook account was a highly active space for sharing content and online discussions between all group members, because our group was smaller and closely connected. Our meetings also borrowed from the photo walk format, in which we met somewhere in the city, strolled around snapping photos, and sat down at a coffee shop to upload, swap information about our editing applications, and have fun catching up. We also had a secondary type of formal group meeting, with one of each taking place approximately monthly. Sometimes we would blend these together: a group meeting, followed by a photo walk, although many didn't join due to other obligations and limited time availability on the weekends. Originally, the photo walk group meetings were less popular overall. I believe this was because it came across as less important or necessary than the "official" business type meetings, and some members did not try attending them until later on. As the weather got colder, some were less bold to walk outside for half an hour! However, at the end of "phase 1" (the term we used to describe the portion of the group from its beginning to the end of the first exhibition, essentially, the data collection period), more members began joining the photo walk, and recognized it as a fun time, where there were more opportunities to get to know other members one-on-one (walking down sidewalks tends to pair people up), and to share our observations and joy for places and experiences within Montreal neighbourhoods.

#### *Content of the "formal" group meetings*

Within the formal *Her Mind's Eye* group meetings, we discussed the latest business of our group, such as the group format (what was working, what wasn't working and why), topics of interest (i.e., learning about social media communities, and questions women brought to the group), and our needs and struggles as group members. During the week(s) proceeding, I kept a record of any questions that arose for me, and I would ask these during the meetings. Often these questions included my concerns about how I was guiding aspects of the group, such as what types of 'educational' content they found was useful, and where they accessed posted content. Very important to me was the question of what methods and spaces were best for our group to communicate within. I was aware of the group's presence in private or multi-purpose social media spaces (particularly Facebook), and I wanted to improve the ways in which we used these

spaces, and check to see if there were aspects which came across as an intrusion. In one instance, group members laughed heartily as several of them concurred that my recent early morning post had set off a notification from their Facebook app on their mobile phone, (which they kept next to their bed) that had awoken them, and so they found solutions, such as muting their phone before bed. This hadn't occurred to me as I had the notifications feature for Facebook turned off, and primarily interacted with Facebook on my computer.

These coffee shop meetings also included a lot of personal sharing in relation to the group, and often, discussion around the implications of and interactions with weekly themes. Meeting face-to-face created a space for supporting the online connections we were making, and was a more comfortable space to share life updates that were not announced online, and personal reflections about city life and mobile photography usage, including how the group integrated with daily activities. For our first meeting, we met at a café near the downtown core of Place des Arts. Funnily enough, this café, which specialized in tea and sweets, was quite filled with women studying and doing group work. The atmosphere was very cordial and comfortable for a group meeting, and for get-togethers of friends. In this informal preliminary meeting I helped participants to review their consent forms, and women brought their phones, excited to set up the app and already wanting help on adjusting the settings. Even having just met, there was an instant comfort among us; it felt as if we knew each other. In fact, I did know many of the women there one way or another; this may have helped to break some initial ice and bring a sense of trust to the atmosphere. There was also a shared interest amongst everyone in the topic of exploring women's (and their own) experience of the urban environment. As the topic shifted into detailed questions about Instagram settings and account set-up, a lively discussion arose, wherein I shared knowledge and research I had done about the topic, and others shared their experiences, information gleaned online, and thoughtful questions and suppositions. The atmosphere from this preliminary meeting grew and developed as group members grew to know each other more in-person.

### *Organizing our meet-ups and attendance*

For the Montreal group, ordinarily three quarters of the members would attend any one meeting, with those who were absent changing each time. Some reasons mentioned for not attending included scheduling conflicts with work, school, or other community organizations, and of course,

sometimes women chose not to attend simply because they didn't feel like it; perhaps they were feeling unwell or had other plans for their day (our gatherings predominantly fell on Saturdays and Sundays).

Initially I arranged meet-ups by posing possible dates on Facebook, some of which had been suggested as possibilities by other group members during prior meetings. The group would then post responses and propose alternatives through a chat session. Sometimes this worked well, and other times it became too messy. Arranging times that worked for everyone was a bit difficult. Particularly during our earlier weeks, I spent more time contacting group members individually to ask about their personal schedule and circumstances, in order to get a feel for the group, and to ensure that no one was left out simply by having needs that differed from the majority's consensus. Later on, we began arranging our meeting through the use of Google Doodle, through personal messages, and occasionally within Facebook chat.

By this point, group members were more comfortable contacting me if they had different needs and wanted to meet up. Usually, it would begin with a brief discussion on Facebook chat raising several possibilities, followed by a few personal messages, following which, I would post several possible times on Google Doodle. This way we could get an overview of everyone's availability, and recognize where there was flexibility. Group members were more willing to make adjustments when they could see and understand everyone's availability and desire to participate. The Montreal group had regular gatherings from October to March, with approximately one meeting each month, or a formal meeting and a photo walk. There were additional/different physical meetings close to the exhibition date. March meetings alone included setting, the vernissage, a "critique" followed by a photo walk, and a final focus group.

***The Vancouver group: Fabulous women, small group and leaderless meetings***

The Vancouver group had approximately three meetings over the first three months, the first two being in the format of photo walks. The third meeting in December, I was present to conduct myself. Although the group members tried to attend and arrange the meetings, the woman whom had originally offered to facilitate the Vancouver group ended up changing her mind just before the start of the group, and so each of these meetings was coordinated through the help of one of the Vancouver group members, and my prompts and group chats on Facebook. Overall, the Vancouver group reduced their frequency of gatherings and, following the first phase of the

group, mostly ceased participation. I should note that this did not appear to be representative of their overall experience in the group, as many of these members were highly active online, communicating with each other and with the Montreal group. So why did the Vancouver group lose momentum, and meet in-person less?

While I am aware that transportation time, cost, and distance was one factor for some of the Vancouver group members, it seemed to me that the two central issues were: 1) the lack of a physically present leader to provide prompts and serve as a guide for group discussions and 2) the small size of the group. Firstly, I recognized that the Vancouver group's size (five people) was too small to enable flexible attendance of the meetings, a characteristic mentioned by Montreal members as being important to their ongoing comfortable membership in the group. In Vancouver, if one or two people were unable, or felt un-interested in attending a gathering, what remained was a very small, three person group. I believe that this put additional pressure on the women in the group to try to arrange meetings when everyone or almost everyone could attend, and thus, also put pressure on those trying to organize, and to others who may have felt they needed to attend when personal circumstances might determine that they should not. Next, regarding the issue of "in-person" leadership, when I arrived in Vancouver and arranged a meet-up, the women were eager, and readily made themselves available to meet. This suggested to me that the online engagement of the last few months had been successful for them, perhaps, that they were excited to have a meeting with the group leader, and possibly that they were awaiting another group meeting. Our discussion was lively, thoughtful and packed with questions, insights into photography, social media, learning and more.

During the meeting, I felt that already the group had bonded both online and from their prior photo walk, which it seems, was indeed successful. I believe what was needed in a group facilitator or leader was a committed, responsible, encouraging/inspiring and/or knowledgeable individual, who could facilitate complex discussions in person, and, in a sense, function as a conduit for the group's physical presence; an individual functioning as a mobile meeting space.

Had there been a co-leader, someone who, even if lacking in expertise or training, would have taken up management of the meetings, and gather important questions, as well as watch for weaknesses in the group's structure and functioning (such as the issue of group size), and taken responsibility for the health of the group on the ground, it could have been possible to continue the educational and online group management from afar. Although I tried to address some of the

issues that came up in the Vancouver group, and to assist the group from Montreal, with everyone's busy schedules, and without my being able to be physically present and take responsibility for the "on-foot" aspects of the group's physical management, and also, feeling limited in my capacity to connect individually with the group members face-to-face, I felt limited in my capacity as an "online" leader.

### ***Collaborative learning at the café.***

The members of the Montreal community who didn't attend either our in-person meetings or photo walks, or attended less frequently, were also the most likely to note in our final focus group that they didn't learn as much. For example, some mentioned that they didn't learn as much about editing and apps, while those who attended the photo walks replied that we shared our techniques as we edited photos in the café after our walk. These conversations also carried over online, for example, into the tag #EditingInHerMind, where some group members posted information about the applications they had used to edit various images. Through discussion, the Montreal group members came to identify the importance of self-motivated participation in the group as an instigation of greater levels of individual learning, group learning/sharing, and overall group production. Group meetings further served as a "check-in," where those who chose to participate less could discover what they were missing. In these meetings, inspiration, motivation, encouragement, and accountability were shared around in good measure, adding up to a healthy community and reinforcement of self-efficacy: "you get what you give."

### ***Social Media Sites***

In addition to photography applications like Instagram, Social Media Photography Communities frequently use Facebook's "groups" feature to organize SMPC events, meetings, post updates or news around group projects, and to promote new initiatives, often centered around a carefully selected hashtag. The difference between these groups' uses of Facebook and *Her Mind's Eye's* is that our group was closed--more like a members-only clubhouse. Normally, Facebook is a space where the group leader or organizers are the primary media providers, and group members primarily receive this content.

Facebook, Instagram and e-mail all facilitate individualized, "one-to-one" personal communications, as well as group communications. Using applications available on smartphones,

such as Instagram and Facebook, enabled group members to instantaneously connect to one another to distribute content, and increased the mobility and speed of producing media content. Notable limitations to the effectiveness of these applications and interaction with these spaces include 1.) the capabilities of individual's smartphone (such as speed, data availability, compatibility with applications, and camera quality) and 2.) one's access to mobile internet, which is often impacted by the cost of monthly data plans. For many members of our group, one or both of these limitations was an issue, which they either worked with or worked around, such as by uploading photographs to applications when they had access to Wi-Fi, such as at a café or at home. Other limitations are social ones, such as work regulations prohibiting smartphones.

### ***Facebook***

The significance of Facebook to our group far exceeded my initial plans and expectations, because the majority of group members already had Facebook accounts and were, to some degree, consistently checking this online space for updates. In Facebook, our group posted much information within our "private" group page, ("private" being so-designated due to the inability to fully secure the space), and through private group chats (where individual members were selected and added to the chat). In the Facebook group, members posted messages intended for the group, links to content of interest, and uploaded photographs (such as installation photos of the exhibition, and pictures of the vernissage).

When I first set up the Facebook account, my hope was that open communication, sharing and posting would take place. This seemed like a challenge, since many of the Facebook groups I have seen seemed to be places of posts with minimal communication taking place. On Facebook, I tried to start off by posting interesting and connected content. For example, shortly after our first discussion about safety and privacy, I posted a trailer for a movie that was suggested by our resident lawyer, Laura, called "Terms and Conditions May Apply." Joanna was first to reply to my posts with written comments, which was very much in line with her enthusiastic and encouraging attitude at the start up of the group, which effectively encouraged others to participate, and set an example. I recall the relief I felt when her first comment arrived. It felt to me like an icebreaker, and the first sign of critical conversation happening outside of what I feared were my didactic and "teacherly" posts. In response to the movie trailer post about privacy and social media, she wrote, "I like the line, 'If you have something you don't want anyone to

know, then maybe you shouldn't be doing it in the first place.” This was good food for thought, particularly regarding the provoking topic of privacy and social media.

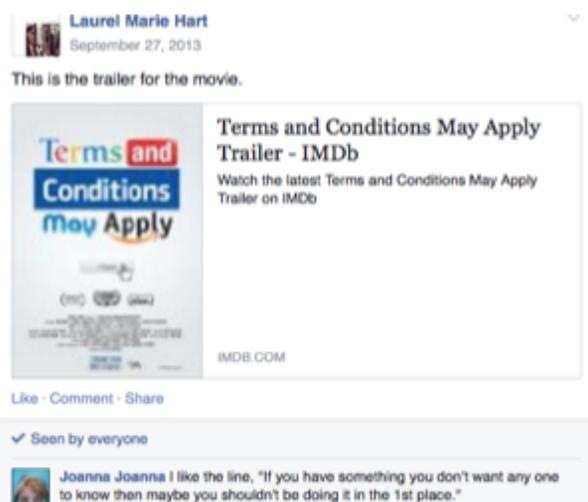


Figure 7. Early Facebook post on the group wall.

The comment from Joanna read: “I like the line, ‘If you have something you don’t want anyone to know then maybe you shouldn’t be doing it in the 1<sup>st</sup> place.’” Over time I grew to rely greatly on Facebook’s messaging/chat system to facilitate collective chats/discussion, and especially, to ask logistical questions such as planning our meet-ups, and for our weekly themes. Messages are a direct form of communication, and so when I sent all the group members a message, they would be alerted either through an email, or the next time they logged in to their Facebook account. This was unlike posting to the group wall, where whether or not the post was shared with members would be dependent on its popularity and Facebook’s algorithms. If information was posted on the group wall, it may not be checked for quite some time. Group members could also quickly contact one another through Facebook, which was particularly useful for their independent planning of future gatherings (after the research stage ended, and when I was not in the city), and to further develop friendships started within the group.

### ***Instagram.***

Instagram also has an instant messaging feature. However, it is less user friendly and although I used it once or twice with group members, overall, I rarely employed this feature. Group members on Instagram primarily posted photos to their individual accounts, that were then commented on when they appeared in other group members’ continuously updating home screens, which provided an ongoing “feed” of photographs. Group members also found each other’s

photos, and viewed the collection of our group's images together through the use of our tags, primarily #hermindseye. Instagram also enabled group members to communicate publically, beyond the group boundaries if they so desired, and facilitated sharing of their photos and their original photo caption onto other social media platforms such as Facebook. While they were learning to share content with others in the group, some group members were also learning to find other like-minded individuals, creating cross-overs into different networks, and gaining more visibility with other SMP communities.

### ***Hashtags, Emails, and a Failed Blog.***

*Hashtags.* Hashtags are present both within Facebook and Instagram, although they are rather uncommonly used on Facebook, and were only used by our group within Instagram. Instagram is designed so that content is primarily organized by each user's account (for example, all the photos I post are organized on my account page), and through the use of tags, key terms or group identifiers. As a case in point, Instagram allows one to conduct a search for either user accounts or for tags. Wikipedia defines a tag (hashtag or #tag) as a type of metadata:

A hashtag is a type of label or metadata tag used on social network and microblogging services which makes it easier for users to find messages with a specific theme or content. Users create and use hashtags by placing the hash character (or number sign) # in front of a word or unspaced phrase, either in the main text of a message or at the end. Searching for that hashtag will then present each message that has been tagged with it. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hashtag>).

Our group had several tags that we used to organize our content and connect to one another. Primarily the tag #hermindseye linked our images together, while secondary tags included: #saturdayinhermind (used for our weekly theme challenges), and #walkinginhermind (for designating pictures taken on group photo walks) and the ever likeable cat tag #hermindseyecats.

*E-mails.* The third space where communication was successful was through e-mail. While participating in complete conversations through email was difficult at best, email was used to distribute organized, focused, or vital information directly to and amongst participants. This is especially true for the exhibition organization. While Facebook allows for the transferal of attachments, they were most frequently sent through email due to ease and the success of transfer, as well as the easy ability to download or upload multiple files at once. I also believe that it is due to the different perceived function of the spaces. Facebook was used as a space for

conversation and sharing interesting clips of information, while email was used for professional, task-oriented communications, such as asking and responding to exhibition questions, submitting texts, and photo files. While Facebook might be accessed at any time of the day by an individual, and usually with social purposes in mind, e-mail was more frequently accessed by group members, and was a platform where focused and personalized instructions (such as: please submit your artists' statement, or, what size do you want this photo printed) might be more easily welcomed.

***The (failed) Blog.*** While originally, I had tried to create a password-protected blog with a comments section, where I had hoped we might discuss issues presented, aside from one or two members, it mostly was not accessed. This blog enabled me to delve deeper into issues than posting a link would allow; I could gather together information from multiple sources and create a one or two page post highlighting key points. I believe the problem with this was that it did not flow with the collaborative dynamic of the group. The blog was created at the outset of the group, at a point when I was still learning to judge the group dynamics, and my own position within it. Throughout the study, it seemed to me that the group responded much more readily to learning from each other, and was more interested in investigating an issue raised by a member of the group, and was less drawn to learning from my educational "text," regardless of how timely or responsive to group questions and issues I designed it to be. In total, I posted about four blog posts before the blog was closed.

***An Instagram moment:***

***A virtual walk along the path of SMP content creation/distribution, and communication***

In order to better explain the experience of social media photography, and the places/spaces (both on foot and online) where mobile photography takes place, provided here is an example of my process as a mobile photographer and SMPC member:

While walking down the street, my eye catches an interesting sight, a child's dropped toy, (reminding me of how few families are now in the neighbourhood), or a tree ablaze with shiny autumn leaves, reflected in the storm puddle below. I snap a photo, (ok, 10 – no – 20). I turn and look over my shoulder - the bus is coming! I place my phone into my pocket, run to the bus, and moments later, slide into a seat. Phone back in my hand, I have 15 minutes. I open Instagram, scroll through others' recently posted images, and feel inspired by the soft, overexposed editing of another's fall scene. I click the heart "like!" and add a comment "you've captured a dream of autumn" or, if the bus is moving fast, "great edit!"

Quickly, I decide to post my photo. I open it up either in a special photo-editing app, or, using the simple editing features (cropping, sharpening, contrast and filters) available on Instagram. I edit the image in five minutes, click publish, add my tags, #Montreal, #autumn, #hermindseye and maybe #saturdayinhermind, and comment with my thoughts of this photo, possibly connecting it with *Her Mind's Eye's* weekly theme. In one step, I click, and simultaneously publish to Facebook (no Twitter for me), and to my Instagram account. Many of the people who follow me on Instagram will see my image come up either instantly in their photo feed or when they next open the app, along with tens or hundreds of others (if it is not buried and lost already in an overflowing stream of images, depending on how many people they follow). At the same time, friends, family and colleagues will see the image and my comment when they are on Facebook. Members of *Her Mind's Eye* either stumble upon it when it pops up in their Instagram feed, or when they search for the tag #hermindseye. Others will find it by my other tags, (such as #Montreal, other keywords). Within seconds – a message pops up on my screen – it's a notification from Instagram, someone has liked my photo. I hop off the bus, on my way to my destination. Twenty minutes and four more likes later, a message from one of the members of *Her Mind's Eye*: “Beautiful street! Where is this?”

### ***Conclusion***

Through my pre-existing experiences and preliminary explorations, I was able to put into place most of the conditions required for the community to be established and begin to grow. In creating *Her Mind's Eye*, the responsibilities that I took up as the group facilitator included tending to the initial technical aspects of the creation of the group, such as the creation of social media accounts and early establishment of group tags, so as to enable communication, and exploration of different technical modes to further group goals of knowledge-sharing and communication. While this section primarily shows my work as a community developer and practitioner to establish the foundation of *Her Mind's Eye*, the next section, *#SaturdayInHerMind* shifts tone, focus and to some degree, audience. Its goal is to represent the diverse viewpoints within *Her Mind's Eye*, and to demonstrate the forms of collaboration, especially the collective creation and communication processes, which grew up from the foundations presented here. While it is written for practitioners and for the field of art education, it is also developed for the community of *Her Mind's Eye*, designed to be a useful reflective drawing together of our collective exploration process. In this sense, it is especially written for the women, and as such, it presents a fuller picture of the actions, spirit, and beautiful complexities of a working social media photography community/research project.

## CHAPTER 8. #SaturdayInHerMind

### *Introduction*

Chapters 7 through 9 present a photographic and narrative account of the group's collective and collaborative creation and response to weekly thematic prompts.

The *Saturday in Her Mind* themes began pretty close to the start of our group; the first post is from October 20<sup>th</sup> 2013. This occurred during our first “official” group session, when many of us met in person in a university-adjacent, arts friendly coffee shop in downtown Montreal. We discussed as a group if we were interested in doing a thematic project, and overall the group members decided that it was worth a try. At this meeting, we discussed the name for our weekly theme and how our weekly themes would work. We modified the group name of #HerMindsEye, which the group members were fond of, and simply adjusted it to include the day of the week (Saturday) in which the new weekly theme updates were to be posted. (This was a nod to other existing thematic projects, mentioned below.)

The concept of our weekly theme challenge called #SaturdayInHerMind was that each week one or two of the woman would think of a theme for the group, and all group members were then challenged to create a response to that theme. From the day the theme was announced, group members could take a photo and tag it #SaturdayInHerMind up until (and past) the Saturday deadline. In order to get us up and started, and since we were all present at the meeting, and excited to get going, I asked if anyone was willing to propose the first theme. A small surprise, after we had joked extensively about stereotypes of social media photos like cat photos, coffee and selfies, was that our first theme was collectively decided as: selfie! In total, our group created 242 media for #SaturdayInHerMind. Here is an example of my inviting theme contributions from group members, from a Facebook message (that I sent out mid-way into *Her Mind's Eye*), on January 10, 2014: “*Anyone have a theme for this week's #SaturdayInHerMind ? Have you already suggested a theme that hasn't yet been featured? Send me a reminder! Did you not think of a theme yet? Now's your time to shine! Theme on! Let's stay inspired, creating and searching through the winter.*”

### ***Background: The use of themes within social media photography communities.***

I had borrowed this idea of a weekly theme from other social media photography communities, and I am sure that I likely learned of the theme challenges first through a combination of searching and watching others' actions on Instagram, and through an early interview with Hind

Akhiyat (aka @vistavista). I personally got quite involved posting photos for one “feature challenge” campaign called #MtlFriday a few months prior to starting HME. This challenge, created by the Montreal Gazette’s Instagram account, was heavily inspired by the input of active members from Instagramers Montreal, who happened to be following the social media activities of local media companies, and were more than happy to share their feedback. It was started in January 2012 after they did a Instagram “survey” question to ask readers if they should continue their theme of #cutefriday or do something new.

An IGER (instagramer) named @erotikpanda commented “Why not set a different theme/subject for every Friday, perhaps one that has some relation to Montreal?” which was rapidly followed by about 20 comments of agreement from other IGERS (at the time, there were only 12 likes for this post.) @Montrealer added “I would love to see a weekly “theme/challenge” with a Montreal twist –Le Métro –Winter reflection – Blue Friday – Habs everywhere – on and on... Needs to be shot in Montreal :D)” In this thread of 20 replies I recognized other members of the Instagramers community who confirmed that there should indeed be a feature challenge, which means a contest or a theme that results in the featuring of a selected image or images on the popular user’s account, or (in this case), in the newspaper. Furthermore, I am sure that these users, each of whom has engaged in leadership in the community as well as exhibitions and other activities, were already familiar with similar photo challenge projects. Within this Instagram post, in the comment section where users replied to their question, the @montrealgazette replied “Thanks for the feedback! We’ll do a MTL challenge starting next week!”

Two other social media communities who have thematic challenges include the #JJ\_challenge created by @JoshJohnson who made the @jjcommunity and other social media photography communities and feature challenges) and #sundaybluesedit created by Rebecca Cornwell, a member of the SMPC collectives Grryo and We Are Juxt. The preceding examples of the Montreal Gazette and Josh Johnson both also involve the organizer selecting the theme, and the community posting related pictures, followed by the organizer selecting a winner. For #SaturdayInHerMind, I did not want to make it into a contest where I selected and featured a “winner,” but rather, to have a conversation starter for our group. I imagined it as a place where we would all be thinking about the same thing at the same time once a week, where we could ask each other questions, and inquire into a single topic together. I see this as a component of our

community that would draw us together, with a core of participants' individual, free and independent creation and interaction with one another.

In a @montrealgazette post dating February 18, 2014, they said "Help us come up with themes for #MtlFriday Challenges." I am curious if they might have recognized and been influenced by our #SaturdayInHerMind challenges with participants generating the group themes, particularly as they began posting images in a similar aesthetic. The @montrealgazette was following my account, as well as other members. The similarities could also have been due to aesthetic styles present within many photo-editing applications that had been newly released. It would be useful to know if our group and the women's selections and presentation of themes caught the attention of an influential Montreal newspaper. The gazette featured our group member, @llangset who was on Instagram before *Her Mind's Eye* was. Responding to their post of her featured image, she stated: "The @montrealgazette was actually my first follower. They have been so supportive of the IG community and it is so much fun to see the highlighting [of] pictures from the community. Many talented people[,] kudos to the Gazette for supporting this project." The fact that the 'reward' for such contest participation is to be distributed in print in the streets is significant as well, as it speaks to the importance of traditional media forms for influencing public culture and as a way to obtain status and recognition. It also means reaching those who are "off-line," or not engaged with public social media art forms. I would like to draw a parallel to this as being similar to our group members holding a physical exhibition of printed images in the street.

Drawing from my position as an artist and group leader, and my feelings about the processes or knowledge generation and analysis taken by the group, I have chosen to position this section as both a narrative description of our group that describes our process, organization, relationality and philosophies, and I also position this section as containing a collective and individual generation of topical themes that are interpreted and explained by participants through their photos and accompanying written content. In this sense, I feel it stands on its own. In this section, I chose to further contribute another level of analysis through the development of sub-categories, and incorporated my voice as a researcher and group facilitator attempting to present a greater coherency of voice, and to serve as a singular deep reflection that I hoped would bring to the women and this study greater insight into our collective production. As such, I provided my own written interpretation of each of the weekly sub-themes that I found through personal

knowing of the women, deep review of the women's individual photographic galleries, recollection of shared discussions and relational knowing. Because the photographs required some interpretation, and knowing that despite my best attempts, this content and experiences are filtered through me, and I may not see the same way, I have completed a number of member checks, and have called upon the women to make adjustments, challenge or inform my writing as needed, though even this holds limitations such as time and likely their recognition that my voice and interpretation is as valid, though likely different, than their own. In the exhibition section, I have included the participants' own individual artist statements, bios, and photographic selections to stand on their own as their final analysis of their works during this period, related to the first exhibition. I return with my interpretive lens in the final *Discussion* chapter, so as to allow for multiple perspectives alongside in-depth consideration.

### ***Layout of weekly theme posters & components of Instagram communication***

For the analysis of our weekly themes, I used the well-organized layout that successfully represents numerous aspects of online engagement in a graphical interface; this is presented by the third party Instagram application/website called Iconosquare ([iconosquare.com](http://iconosquare.com)). In order to create these images, I began by searching for the tag that was created for our weekly theme called #SaturdayInHerMind. Next, I opened all the images of Saturday in Her Mind themes in a new window, and did a screen capture that (clockwise, from the top left hand corner) includes:

- 1) The photo/image that is used as a "poster" to advertise the image.
- 2) The caption that was posted with the weekly theme.
- 3) The author of the image
- 4) The associated tags for the image, created by the image's author
- 5) The number of likes and who liked the image
- 6.) The comments section.

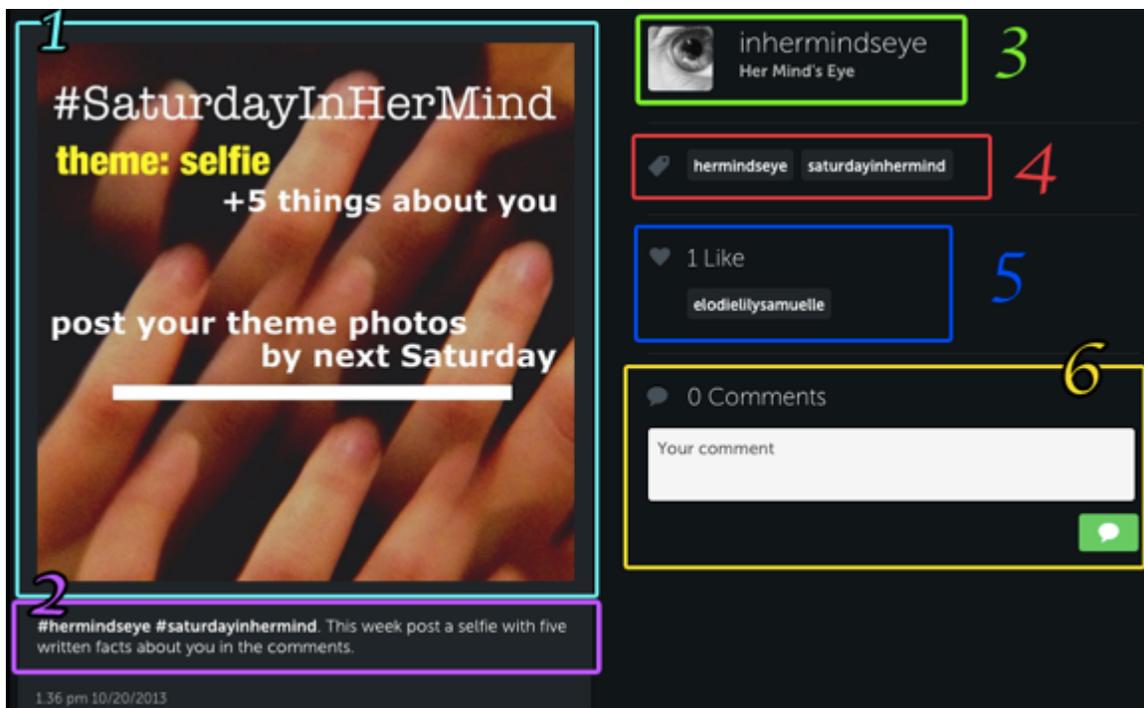


Figure 8. Depicting the layout of #SaturdayInHerMind Instagram posts.

- 1.) **The photo image/poster for each theme** was posted on the @inhermindseye account. It then showed up in each participant's Instagram feed to announce the new weekly theme. It was meant to be inspiring or intriguing, easily reference-able, and later on, as a means for each member to be highlighted in conjunction with their theme. Alongside the theme, members were asked if they had an image for the theme, from which I could create a poster. Later on, as more became familiar with editing apps, I invited participants to try creating their own poster. Whether or not they took me up on this offer was often dependent on their familiarity with editing applications, the amount of time they had available, and how these two factors (and others) would interplay and influence whether they wanted to, or felt able to create a poster for the group at this stage or not. In these cases, the option to "collaborate" in creating a poster with me or another member, and providing me with the image for the poster's basis, provided another means to dabble in this world of social media photography and visual / design-based communication.
- 2.) **The caption** is the message written by me to accompany the image. For Saturday in their mind, it is usually an explanation of the theme, recognition of who posted it, and encouragement to group members based on what is happening in the group (this I know through our in-person

meetings, group chat discussions on Facebook as well as Facebook posts, and through my continuous observations and interactions within Instagram.)

3.) ***The author of most of the Saturday In Her Mind themes*** is @inhermindseye, in other words, it is the group account where I post content to the group members.

4.) ***The tags*** here are minimal, as the aim is only to reach our group members. For this reason they are tagged #HerMindsEye (which is our overarching group tag, one which we check when we want to see what each other has posted) and the weekly theme tag #SaturdayInHerMind.

When group members post an image in response to the theme, they usually use both of these tags as well. The advantage to using the #SaturdayInHerMind tag is that it enables us to see only the images in response to the weekly theme, where the overarching #HerMindsEye tag presents all the images posted by group members that they have chosen to tag in connection to the group.

Generally, many of these are not theme specific. The benefit to using the #HerMindsEye tag as well is that group members who are checking that tag primarily will be exposed to the image.

This is especially important when members all post at different times. Sometimes we needed a group update #HerMindsEye, and sometimes we wanted to look and compare images about our weekly theme only, with fewer distractions.

5.) The heart ♡ ***is Instagram icon-speak for “like”***. (It is similar to the like “thumbs up” sign used on Facebook.) When other Instagram users like an image, they click on the heart symbol, and the image gains more “likes.” This shows me their favourable response to the post, and can also inform me as to who has seen and at least minimally engaged with the post.

6.) In this example, ***the comments section*** is empty. (The white box is a place for me, the user who was logged into the iconosquare website, to post a comment on Instagram through the website.) Of significance, is that when other Instagram users have commented on the image, their comments will show up in this section before the white box. This is where you can find group members’ comments.

### ***The presentation of weekly themes sections***

After the introductory image for each theme is a grouping of participants’ photographic responses, followed by the captions posted by each of the authors of images, listed in order from left to right. Sometimes, comment responses from other group members are listed following their statement, and “Comments:” The @ sign symbolizes the individual’s Instagram handle, representing who is

speaking. This is presented in context, and with more detail, in the first thematic section “Selfie.” In many cases, I grouped like images together, using sub-categories as a means of interpretation. The headings for these themes are sometimes specific to a common theme, and occasionally, as was needed, present a few sub-themes that overlap. Also, infrequently, I have removed multiple image submissions from a single author, although I have tried to present their ideas by including the comment tags for the missing images. Similarly, occasionally I have removed my own images for the sake of brevity. Each image is hot linked to the original image on Instagram. Clicking the image will open your web browser, and will direct you to the permanent link to the full size image on the Instagram website. Note: On some occasions, the image does not contain a link, as a larger image would clearly identify an individual depicted in the image. Furthermore, hyperlinks to the image are only provided for those group members who have set their accounts as public on Instagram. Individuals who have private accounts cannot be viewed on Instagram unless one is following their account on Instagram. Frequently, redundant tags have been deleted in users’ comments on their images. Though important, most of the #HerMindsEye and #SaturdayInHerMind tags have been removed for brevity. Some redundant tags are sometimes left intact, to provide a clearer sense of the growing use of tags by group members.

*Developing the themes:*

The majority of the themes were developed through Facebook. On Facebook I would send a message to all the members of the group, asking if anyone had a theme for the week. These were often included in other updates, and messages about arranging group meet ups, etcetera. Sometimes group members posted their theme within the collective chat message, while other times they messaged me individually to discuss their idea, or posted it as a comment on Instagram. Under the theme anticipation/fear, I provide an example for how these negotiations and decisions take place through a transcript of Facebook conversation wherein the second theme of anticipation/fear was developed together with group members. It also demonstrates how our group interactions take place at all times of day, in any location (one member was at a friend’s party) and how we could engage creatively “live,” and even across time zones. @sarasramblings and Jodi, who co-developed the anticipation/fear theme were members of the Vancouver and Montreal groups, respectively. Also seen here is the tone of our co-creating, learning and

collaborating on Facebook, which is often marked by jesting and fun, and at the same time, a serious/focused creative atmosphere. Lastly, it is productive – things get done quickly!

*Our Weekly Themes: Saturday In Her Mind*

<b>Theme #1: Selfie</b>	<b>Theme #10: We are Family</b>
<b>Theme #2: Fear (and/or) Anticipation</b>	<b>Theme #11: New Year, New Projects</b>
<b>Theme #3: The love of your life</b>	<b>Theme #12: Collage</b>
<b>Theme #4: Favourite Place to Create</b>	<b>Theme #13: The Ugly Photo</b>
<b>Theme #5: Stillness in Motion</b>	<b>Theme #14: Warm &amp; Cozy</b>
<b>Theme #6: Joy</b>	<b>Theme #15: Guilt</b>
<b>Theme #7: Mirror, Mirror on the Wall</b>	<b>Theme #16: Love</b>
<b>Theme #8: Double/Double: Close-ups &amp; Paths</b>	<b>Theme #17: Snow: A Love/Hate Relationships</b>
<b>Theme #9: Stories</b>	<b>Theme #18: Water Around Me</b>

**#SaturdayInHerMind: Early-Stage**

**Introduction:** In the early stage of #SaturdayInHerMind, the themes tended towards being “getting to know you” themes. From the dreaded selfie to Fear (alongside Halloween) and the love of your life, our early themes represented social extremes, questions you couldn’t normally ask. Our group, however, really wanted to know about each other. Everyone was intrigued.

**Theme #1: Selfie**

The selfie theme, mentioned in the introduction, was chosen by the group within our physical meeting, and first proposed by @marjobourge. Her idea was that we could begin by introducing ourselves to one another. Someone added that we should each share five interesting facts about ourselves. Another chimed in that a selfie doesn’t necessarily have to be stereotypical; i.e. it doesn’t have to involve the face. Although within the actual thematic post itself, not much interaction can be seen, the exchange happened on the individual posts to follow, where group members answer the call for a “selfie” and begin to introduce themselves and discuss with one another within the comments sections of each photo. Although ordinarily, I will follow the poster of the theme with a sub-categorization of participants’ images, followed by their sequential comments, in order to wade into the water of cross-platform media sharing and communication, I am beginning the first theme with a bit more of a narrative.

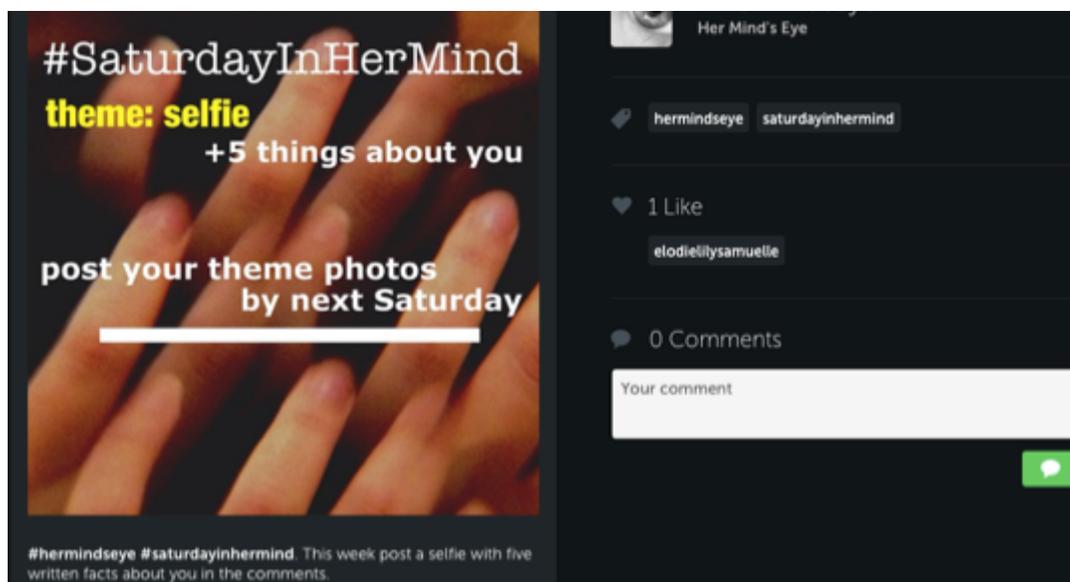
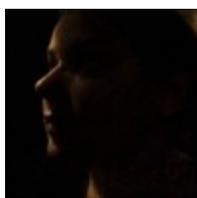


Figure 9. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no.1: Selfie

I took up the challenge first. Since it was asking a lot to present oneself on social media, I thought that I had better begin bravely and set an example. Unlike other teaching moments, this teaching through leading involved sharing self-reflective, personal insights. Also, it happened at 1:30 am, likely from the comfort of my bed, a few minutes before nodding off. I've decided to primarily use my own self-portrait in its completeness here, as it seemed more appropriate than presenting some of the sometimes-intimate self-portraits and personal information about individual group members in this space.



**@laurelhart** 1. I'm told I have a very European nose. 2. Last year I was in Japan briefly. In some ways, it didn't feel so different then here. I think it may be because I was jet lagged for 3/4 of the trip, or, people are people & cities are cities. 3. I haven't felt surprised very often lately. Is it a good thing? 4. I think that coffee shops in the city are like family living rooms for people far from home, only you have to pay someone to smile at you and offer a drink. 5. I sneeze loudly. It sounds like a horn. I sneezed while typing this.

Figure 10. Breaking the ice, the first self portrait.

In response to my portrait, @morningmango commented (on the photo, on Instagram): “*Re: #4: one friend appreciates family style/communal seating in restaurants as he's far from home and misses family dinners. City solutions...*” While @paddleon replied: “*Thoughtful comments, you find home where you can. I watch the homeless, there are a few tents along the rail tracks. Amazing to consider winter life there, and how awful the shelters must be to make that choice. That is a stunning portrait, Laurel!!*” I replied to @paddleon’s comment on Instagram,

*“@paddleon I don't think I've seen these tents before. Re: the portrait- Thank you. It was accidental, sorta. I just saw a small light source in the dark and snapped a few. I wish I had a newer camera, or used the main camera (I don't quite recall) to have achieved higher resolution.”*

Note: This comment-based communication will be presented in the forthcoming thematic sections in a more simplified format. The first creator of the image will have their Instagram name or handle (recognizable by its being preceded by the @ symbol) in bold. For example: **@laurelhart**. Their first post about the image will be in plain text, while and subsequent comments and discussion about the image, and other commenting individuals will be listed in italics, following the label of comments. For example “Comments: @paddleon You find home where you can.”

In this portrait, I posted my “five facts about me” not within the original caption to my image, but rather, within the first comment after it. The purpose for this is multi-part: 1) if I then post my image to Facebook through Instagram, the detailed comments are not posted to Facebook, as it only includes the image and the initial comment, and 2) when the image shows up in individual’s news feeds, the entire comment will not necessarily show up initially (which limits the number of viewers to those who click to view the comment) and 3) at the time of the group, Instagram did not contain the option to edit comments once they were posted. This is highlighted by my following comments in which I said “\*than . Sorry, can't easily fix typos” “Typos, and 1:30am.” Similarly, you will often find grammatical and spelling errors in our comments and even in my initial group post on Instagram. This is part of the “natural” and speedy communication that happens on social media, and is also a result of Instagram previously scrolling while writing (making it difficult or impossible to review one’s earlier sentences). It also disallowed edits once the post was published.

It was easier to post the image along with initial simple information (such as our theme tag #SaturdayInHerMind and group tag #HerMindsEye), and to compose text in an alternate place (such as within notes on my iPhone, or in email where it would be auto-saved) and to then copy and paste a long caption as a comment after the image was successfully posted. At this time I had the additional problem of Instagram frequently crashing or refreshing, my in-process writing thereby vanishing along with it, while I was yet in the middle of composition. As a result, I frequently composed longer text within an alternate application. This may have been due to bugs in the program, or related more so to common discrepancies between the operating system

of my smartphone, or a chronic lack of memory on my iPhone that I always experienced, as photos stored on my phone take up a lot of space. The women's self portraits ranged from face portraits, to body parts (like hands), blurred or reflection portraits, and belongings and routines, to name a few. The degree to which group members shared personal information, whether factual, introspective, poetic, zany, or other, varied significantly. This is to be expected and I consider it to be a good sign, particularly following the workshop on personal security and safety, and the ethics forms in which some members chose full revelation and identity promotion, while some selected that only their Instagram name (or "handle") be used. Group members determined the degree to which they were comfortable with self-revelation, and approached their self-portrait, and five personal details accordingly.

### Selfies: Faces



Figure 11: Theme, selfie. Image set, Faces.

**@livenow** 5factsaboutme: 1) creativity is my religion 2) love to travel 3) I love silk screening 4) love to document (pics) street art and graffiti 5) shy but workin on that

**@joyjoyjodi** I'm a chocoholic/ sugar/ snack fiend but actually a healthy eater believe it or not. [...]I've accepted I'm a tad weird. [...]very shy in spite that I like to dress as a superhero every chance I get

**@marjobourge** I studied art but work in a bank. [...]My tattoo took 8 sessions to complete for a total of 53 hours. The longest session was 10 hours in one day!

**@sarasramblings** Some of my post-workout moments are when I feel my best and most confident; I can wiggle my ears

**@magyar\_meringue** all smiles, chocolate, coffee, running and blueberries

### Selfies: Obscured body



Figure 12. Selfies: Obscured body

**@morningmango** 1. A 'friend' recently smacked my hip, told me I'd gained weight, and said I should walk around the block twice. 2. The comment made me feel 13 and preanorexic. [...] I looked for this skirt for two years, then this morning reached into the closet and it magically came out, suggesting I may have found the gateway to Narnia. 5. I like my feet, and would go barefoot all year, if I could.

**@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna** “I moved from Vancouver to MTL 6 years go [...] I have an uncontrollable hysterical laugh when I get nervous. [...] For the first time in a very long time I feel like I am truly pointing my life in a healthy and happy direction.

**@propelling381** Was introduced to Pierre Elliot Trudeau in 1996, in a small music club on St. Laurent. East coaster who misses the Atlantic Ocean, in all its fury.

### Selfies: Representational objects (and body)



Figure 13. Selfies: Representational objects (and body)

**@morningmango** 1. Vegan 2. Love grocery shopping 3. Makes me feel womanly 4. Esp. when using my jute Going To Market bag 5. Pickings were slim.

**@llangset** 1. Camera-shy. [...] Inveterate tree hugger. 5. I am taking a break from my day job scientist/writer.

**@paddleon** Depending on the public transit I choose, it's 1.5 - 2.5 hour commute to school, one way. [...] My girls (2) are the same age as most of the kids in my class. [...] My Mum is 88, lives in the same house the past 64 years. I still get to visit 'home'.

### *Selection from transcript of final focus group on the theme of selfies*

In our final focus group we discussed this ironic interest, or the complex relationship between the group members and the issue of selfies:

Laurel – ...in addition to time, were there any other things that were personal limitations to taking photos or participating? Joanna – I didn't want to take pictures of myself. Is that a limitation? Laurel – Sure. Haley – Did I...? I didn't want to do “selfie selfie” Laurel – So our first assignment to do selfie, you had...

Joanna – Yeah I think I did a reflection off of the coffee table Sarah - Yeah I did one off the train ceiling

Lisa – So if we're going to have a coffee table book it's going to be a coffee table book with no pictures of any of us? *Everybody laughed* Laurel - They will all be reflective self-portraits, in the way we are comfortable...

Laughter continues Marjolaine – Well, the self-portrait can be anything. Because I took pictures for 30 days of self portraits, Lisa – Oh boy. Marjolaine - You know, once I took my ear, I took my hand, I took a reflection of myself, I took so many things, that were not exactly me. Of like, my face, and so, it can be a lot of things...

Haley - It's true. Marjolaine – ...it could be her favourite book, it *could* be, you know? Because if you [count that, there are] a lot different things, to be.

There is a tension between self-revelation on Instagram and privacy protection. While self-revelation leads to deeper connections, interpersonal understanding, and establishes an atmosphere of intimacy that is present within all forms of social media, it also raises questions about comfort and what information is safe to publish online, as well as who may be viewing one's account (also, whether it is a private or public account). Sometimes a picture is an easier and more socially acceptable way to communicate more varied, personal, or intimate information, than words. Arguably, it is more socially acceptable to reveal common information on social

media through writing, while art and visual communications enjoy more tolerance for revelations of complex, critical or emotional information about oneself, one's environment, and society.

### *Theme #2: Fear (and/or) Anticipation*

This week's #SaturdayInHerMind theme is a combined effort of @sarasramblings & @joyjoyjodi (who snagged this feature picture at a party on the spot - very cool!). The themes emerged surrounding Halloween but you can take them any way you wish. So, will you explore the dark side, or embrace some other anticipation? You decide! Let us know which you chooses & why? #HerMindsEye Happy Photo Haunting!

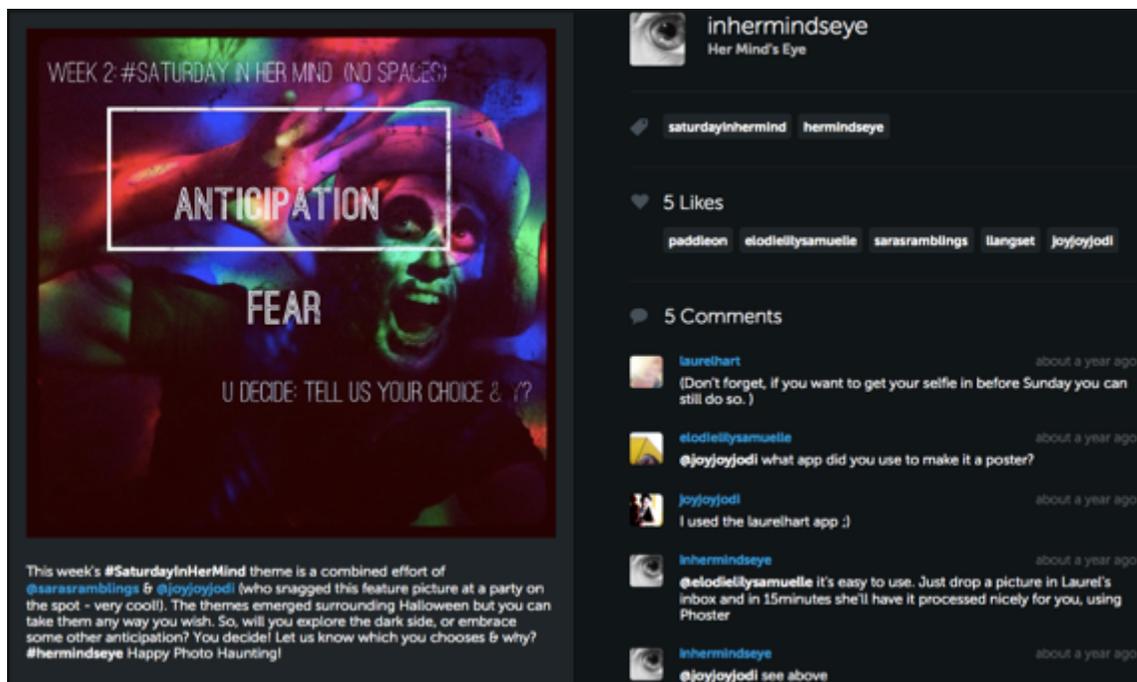


Figure 14 Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no.2: Anticipation/Fear

The theme of fear/anticipation was the first theme to be decided upon through the platform of Facebook chat. In order to demonstrate the atmosphere of communication and the means by which collaborative theme making took place in an online space, here is a short log of the chat that took place, wherein Jodi was the first to rely to my call for a theme (at midnight!) and @sarasramblings and Sarah (two different women, the first from Vancouver and the second from Montreal) explored and developed the topic further, in order to broaden it to connect with their interests. Here is an excerpt from the October 27<sup>th</sup> Facebook group chat:

Laurel 11:59am Help! I'm in need of a Saturday challenge before midnight! Anyone online with an idea for a theme?

Laurel 12:00pm Also, if you haven't already, don't forget that tonight's Saturday challenge is coming to close - get your selfie picture in with 5 facts about you before it's too late! We might let you off the hook if it's a day late, since you didn't have any reminder and it's our first week.

@sarasramblings 12:02pm Something to do with Halloween or fear (since it's that spooooooky season)? Or the masks that we wear, also keeping with the Halloween theme.

[...] Jodi 12:05pm make it more specific then. we can have Halloween themes for 2 weeks;)  
 Laurel 12:06pm lol. You're a fan of the season I take it Jodi?  
 Jodi 12:08pm but of course!  
 Laurel 12:08pm What do you think [@sarasramblings?] Do you perchance feel up to deciding this week's theme? or Jodi - maybe you could help her narrow it down? team effort?  
 Jodi 12:09pm anticipation leading to Halloween.  
 Sarah 12:10pm I like the idea of fear, harder to portray.... [] You want it with an example?  
 Laurel 12:11pm Interesting. Anticipation I usually think of as a good thing but I guess it can be also anticipating something scary [] I generally find a pic to create a little poster image for the Instagram group with but I thought I'd be more fun someone who designed the theme (or co designed) helped make the image  
 Jodi 12:12pm your own view of anticipation leading to the victorious day which is know as Halloween  
 Laurel 12:12pm but if it's troublesome I can make one. [] Lol. Can you boil it down to a slightly shorter word or phrase? [] What about a dual theme of Fear & Anticipation It's a strange combo... ? thoughts?  
 Jodi 12:16pm it could work  
 Laurel 12:17pm Jodi would you be interested in making a 'poster' image for it? [] (Or [@sarasramblings], if you're interested)  
 Jodi 12:18pm I'm at a Halloween party so I don't know how I would make a poster. I can take a picture of something and send it to you  
 Laurel 12:18pm I don't mind doing it either, but like I said.. might be more fun & inspiring if it's not just my pics. Sure that sounds great! Can you email it to me? inhermindseye@gmail.com (Also I'm jealous and wishing I was at a Halloween party now... )  
 Jodi 12:29pm did you get it?  
 Laurel 12:30pm yep! [] on it! nearly done [] Thank you [@sarasramblings] and Jodi! I got this week's challenge up just in time. It looks great! Have fun..

Through this Facebook chat transcript, you can also see the process of knowledge creation and idea sharing that was further developed in the second online communication space of Instagram. Ideas about fear and anticipation were developed individually, and built upon/discussed collectively in discussions that took place within the comments sections of individual group members' image posts.

### Fear & Anticipation: Trying something new



[Photo of  
 @sarasramblin  
 gs with  
 boyfriend &  
 his daughter]

Figure 15. Fear & Anticipation: Trying something new

**@solelidad** For the first time, the interwebs have influenced me to buy something. IG fellows, thanks for all your #kale #juiceoftheday pictures and recipes ! I'm thinking greens with a touch of #ginger. Also, for some absurd reasons that only my imagination has the secret of, I was picturing thousands of people getting up on chairs to get that kind of perspective. At restaurants, your ateliers, cafés etc. then realized that it's just the phone that had to be over the table. Still happy to be adjusting to mobile photography, but prefer the smiles I get when picturing how you all make such nice images.

**@paddleon** Deadlines and new ventures, all stirring up fear to complete and begin properly...

**@hannah\_nutwood** For #SaturdayInHerMind I would like to go on record and say that I much prefer Anticipation to Fear. I'm an individual who enjoys the comfortable and familiar compared to the unknown and, therefore, scary.

Anticipation is predicting that something good is at the end of the journey; however, fear is certainly still the most rewarding. I have to keep telling myself this when I find I'm doing something new outside of my comfort zone  
**@sarasramblings** Vulnerable moment for my #SaturdayInHerMind homework: #Fear and #Anticipation are inextricably linked when it comes to how much I care about these two, so I'll have to choose both.

*Comments: @laurelhart - I also found fear and anticipation were linked. That is incredibly interesting since the themes were co-developed with you and @joyjoyjodi, I never would have expected it! @sarasramblings - I know! I wonder if they HAVE to be linked... fear without anticipation? That may depend on our ideas around anticipation. Can there be anticipation without fear? Maybe not. @paddleon a child will count down the days til their birthday or Christmas in gleeful anticipation...*

### Anticipation & Fear / Pure Anticipation



Figure 16. Anticipation & Fear / Pure Anticipation

**@artubuts7** Love, desire, fear, anticipation & denial...

**@joyjoyjodi** The anticipation is killing me that I can't contain myself.

**@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna** Anticipation is my theme. When I find a really amazing book and I am nearing the final pages I tend to put it down more because I do not want it to end. I savor each page sometimes reading it twice, putting off the long anticipated last page.

**@livenow** #SaturdayInHerMind #vacation #anticipation

The theme of fear and anticipation allowed for many avenues of accessing and exploring the theme. They are presented here in three general categories. The first is rather consistent, which is the fear and anticipation of the unknown and trying something new, the degree of this is vast, stretching from trying a new type of vegetable preparation to deep and loving attachment in relationships. The second section is not so uniform, with the first image representing love, anticipation, fear and ultimately denial, the latter three all speak to anticipation of something enjoyed (although the second image, showing a Halloween costume and the excitement of an upcoming party may not show it, as it is a simultaneously a literal representation of fear.)

While **@joyjoyjodi** was excited to approach fear in the spirit of Halloween and was eagerly anticipating the creative events that she would enjoy through the Halloween season,

**@sarasramblings**, Marie France and **@paddleon** approached the theme on a more personally challenging note, revealing life struggles and adventures they were facing. These included

returning to undergraduate fine arts program, anticipating and denying oneself sweets due to

health related fears, and opening one's heart and life to the possibility of love and family. Within

**@sarasramblings** post, she and I had a discussion about whether sometimes fear and anticipation

are connected. We anticipate something that we may also be afraid of losing, or fear the unknown. @paddleon's response, presenting the imagery of a child anticipating her birthday was a reminder that anticipation can be without fear. @hannah\_nutwood bridges the two, going on the record as "preferring anticipation to fear," but highlighting the fact that fear symbolizes risk taking, which leads to the arrival of that which was anticipated at the end of the journey. Others presented added forms of anticipation, such as an exciting upcoming holiday plan, visiting a new restaurant, a book that is a page-turner, or a delicious new Instagram inspired kale smoothie!

### ***Theme #3: The love of your life***

*This week's theme for the #SaturdayInHerMind challenge comes to you from @a\_tornado\_named\_joanna. She said that it is not necessarily a romantic theme - it is whatever is in your life that is "The Love of your Life" (the image is a collaboration involving her picture and my edits, all iPhone, edit took me about 15 min.). Remember tag one or more photo with the week's theme, and if you're up for it, I've really enjoyed reading many thorough comments through which ideas are elaborated on. Do you have an idea for next week's theme, that you'd like to learn and receive responses from a wonderful group of women? Send me a message on Facebook - it never hurts to be ready in advance! Another great big thank you to @joyjoyjodi & @sarasramblings for their jointly envisioned thought provoking tandem theme of fear and/or anticipation. It was really enlightening what we all chose. ... Say what? You forgot to add your #SaturdayInHerMind image response to fear/anticipation? Well... I'm sure if you got it in by Sunday, none of us would criticize. If you feel you haven't been posting pictures much, consider taking this theme as an opportunity to challenge yourself and stay connected to the group weekly. Also - next Sunday afternoon there will be a Montreal photo walk. Ill be in touch with Vancouver peeps shortly about availabilities for the same. Stay tuned!*

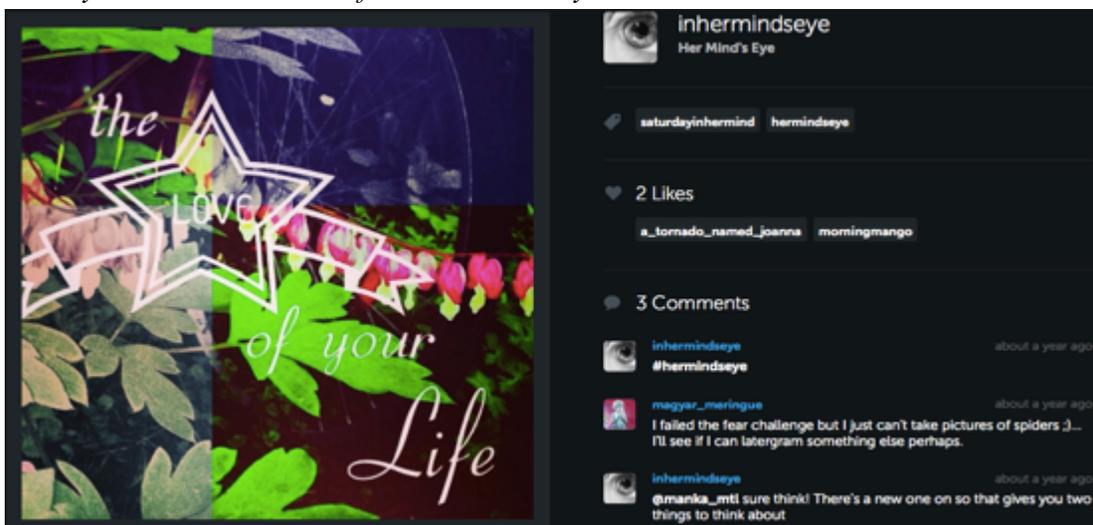


Figure 17. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no.3: The love of your life

For the theme "the love of your life", the women depicted the little things that they appreciate everyday, such as fresh cherry tomatoes, moments with family, and love for the architecture and

seasons in the both Montreal and Vancouver. Also represented was the ability to create. In particular: appreciation for one's own body that enables creation, and the materials through which we create, like printing presses, cameras, knitting needles, and beautifully edited photos.

### The simple living of life, a sensuous love



Figure 18. The simple living of life, a sensuous love

**@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna** I love riding a bike. With that said I've not been on one in more than 5 years. Some of my very best memories are of just cruising down the road or on summer vaca having taken thr bikes to thr lake. #HerMindsEye I want to get a new (or used) cruiser bike. I want to do the Tour du Ile next year!!!

**@morningmango** Two of my life's loves: lover-harvested cherry tomatoes, and a good book at lunch. Other images: Is a single red rose, from mi amore, just because, ever cliched? Not for me. #sweetsurprise #loveofmy

**@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna** I am very much in love with lemon and rose tea. The color contrast is outstanding. #hermindseye and for a secondl love tea!!!! *Comments: @morningmango That must smell amazing. @marjobourge Yummy!!! Love the colours!!!!*

**@laurelhart** I have thought about this weeks #hermindseye challenge long and hard—what is a love that has maintained throughout my entire life? Several ideas have come up, but today I present to you a love of my life: Light. [...] I love light. It's so beautiful. A change in light changes everything.

### The love of places/spaces: architecture and nature



Figure 19. The love of places/spaces: architecture and nature

**@magyar\_meringue**

This. City. Everything happens for a reason and when I thought I was just drifting without a reason, life was directing me towards love.

**@morningmango** Blue sky, sunshine, trees. Three more loves of my life.

**Marie France** Under Granville Bridge. Love this p.o.v. *Comments: @a\_tornado\_named\_Joanna Ohhhh golly. You make me miss Van so much! @marjobourge I hope I'll have the chance to visit Vancouver one day! Looks like such a beautiful city!!! @llangset I agree!*

**@llangset** Inside I find the old leaves, crisp and dry. The pigeons cluster under the falling eaves. A black cat jumps. #loststeeple

### The act of creation (individually and our collected results)



Figure 20. The act of creation (individually and our collected results)

**@joyjoyjodi** I thought long and hard about "the love of my life" and it became clear, the love of my life has always been there, helped me succeed, aided in everything I did, was my creative support, it fed me, clothed me and wiped my tears. the list is endless. so the love of my life is none other than my right hand man, aka my right hand. I would definitely be lost without it ;)

**@elodiellilysamuella**

|the love of my life| I picked •creation• It is what I found to be the most life giving. It makes me appreciate what I am part of, what I have been blessed with, and hopefully invite others to do the same.

**@solelidad**

I think people interpret and see life through different paradigm or modes de pensée. Logic. Science. Relations. Etc. My love of life channels through CULTURE : arts, expressions, societies, ancient or new. As human kind, we've been producing masses and masses of cultural materials, sounds, traditions, meanings to communicate and relate to each other. To grasp what's going on or what has been and evolved into. And even if I am not an artist who "produces" cultural artifacts, I am a grateful admirer of the human cultural diverse expressions.

**@paddleon**

The love of my life .... is a first pressman, in fine arts terms that's master printer. He has worked in printing for 26 years, offset presses, 1-6 colour. Since the theme is love, and I love studying print at Concordia, this photo is today's - my first go on offset litho press. I love figuring out what he has spoken about all these years... even low-key.

### Someone(s) special: Love & family.

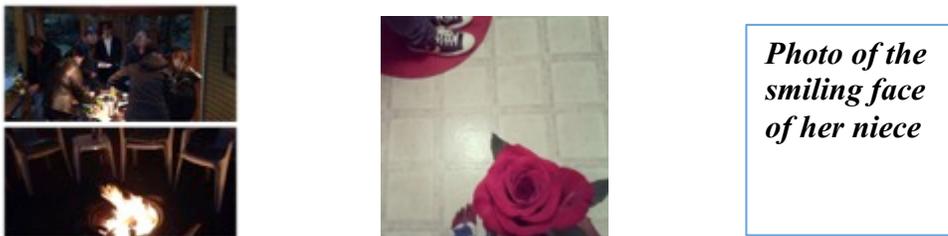


Figure 21. Someone(s) special: Love & family.

**@sarasramblings**

|They're such bad photos but it's what I've got for #SaturdayInHerMind: the love of my life is my family. My crazy, kooky family. These shots are from Thanksgiving around the campfire, a Macdonald tradition!

**@morningmango** Is a single red rose, from mi amore, just because, ever cliched? Not for me. #sweetsurprise #loveofmy

**@marjobourge** The love of my life for #SaturdayInHerMind #HerMindsEye I have a lot of important people in my life but without this little cutie pie, my life would not be complete!

Though not altogether absent, it is worth noting that perhaps more traditional responses such as romantic partners were not at the forefront. Despite the theme's orientation of "the love of my life," which social conventions might assume to be primarily representative of a life partner, the key topics that emerged spanned the gamut of life experiences: from a sensuous enjoyment/appreciation for small morsels of daily life, from the ability to ride a bike, to fresh, affordable tomatoes, and the vibrant colors present in tea and light. Next, the significance of architecture and nature arose, particularly in images that show a balance between the two, and necessarily, the woman's own accessibility to these spaces, it could be said, particularly within the scope of her daily activities. Third, emerged a theme I might not have expected at all – a love of creation. One's appreciation for her own hands that enable her to create, the tools to create, appreciation of human creations both physical and intellectual (culture could fit into many of these categories, which may be why one photographic vision couldn't capture it all!), and printing press, which illustrates a tool and process of creating that further connects one in relationship, through a shared process of creating. The three final images which speak to love in connection to people, show a family gathering, an embrace of a cliché of romance but in the real barefoot moment of the everyday, and a special connection with one family member that spans generations, a joyful smiling face of @marjobourge's niece.

Although it may say something about the women who joined the group, as well as changing social and urban patterns in Canada that the images were not stereotypical in representing romantic love, I believe that more so it shows a desire to represent independent characteristics of oneself, that reach beyond traditional views that present women's "loves" as being singularly centered around family and romantic relationships. I confess, when I think of women I frequently see them as representatives/spokespeople for children, and less so, for nature, community and local environments, and as cultural creator and appreciator. These other roles are in my mind, but how much are they in the mind's eye of Canadian society in general? How then might women's hushed voices mean less beautiful urban spaces, and less access to basic daily needs and joys, like fresh healthy food and transportation? @morningmango's submissions (as well as @a\_tornado\_named\_joanna) spanned the gamut of categories, demonstrating that the love of women's life may be a blend of all these things. Sensuous, healthy, accessible daily living; creating and utilizing her resources and talents; access to nature and architectures with

balance with natural features; and accessibility to one's family, and freedom/joy in romantic love as well.

#### ***Theme #4: Your Workspace or Favourite Place to Create***

*This week's #SaturdayInHerMind theme comes to you from @hannah\_nutwood. What is your workplace or favorite place to create? Sorry for it arriving a wee bit past Saturday midnight. I hope you can forgive me - and that you were already mulling the theme over thanks to the Facebook thread. :) anyone eager out there? For details on my delay-inducing drama you can check my photo feed for clues. Looking forward to photos of your mad creative labs and workspaces! #HerMindsEye*



Figure 22. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no.4: Your workspace or favorite place to create

A place of her own, her space to work and create. Having one's own space to think, create, explore and be inspired came across throughout the theme of "workspace," as did the difficulty of trying to secure such a space. This theme's image came from a photo provided by @hannah\_nutwood, that I edited.

#### ***Some home workspaces***



Figure 23. Some home workspaces

**Haley** The joy of reading and writing on a peaceful Saturday.

*Comments: @hannah\_nutwood -- I love those textiles! @marjobourge --This is such a lovely space! Feels cozy!*

**@marjobourge** Here is my favourite corner of my studio space... My mood board and work table! Every time I'm in there I'm happier than usual and I'm pretty much always happy so you can imagine how happy I am to be there! :D

**@hannah\_nutwood** My workspace (only a day late)! Having just purchased a house this year, I was able to claim a nook for myself and drill as many holes as I liked into the walls. It's a work in progress and too often a catch-all for clothes and papers, but I'll get the hang of it soon enough *Comments: @hannah\_nutwood -- I could have just as easily photographed the couch where I've been doing my most recent knitting projects. @laurelhart -- I think the multiplicity of workspaces is a common theme in our workspace images @marjobourge -- Absolutely lovely. What an inviting workspace.*

**@sarasramblings** My #workspace. It's nothing fancy, but with my Inspiration Pear up above, some juicy creativity happens from that seat!

*Comments: @morningmango -- I love that you have an inspiration pear.*

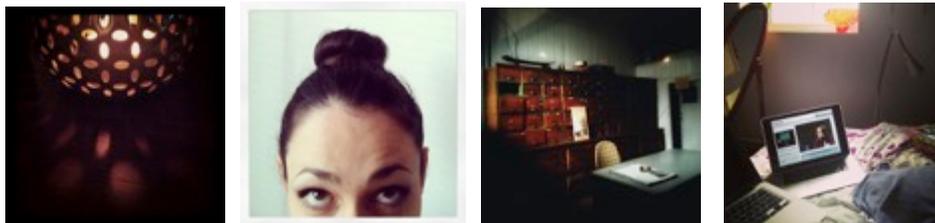
**@morningmango** Fave Workplace 1. Bookshelf where beloved friends live. Writing begins with reading. City living currently means tiny living spaces and unexpected harmonious cohabitation. Never expected my beloved Daughters Of Africa anthology to live inches away from a lurid AC DC poster. Yet, there it is.

*Captions from two additional pictures, not shown here, links to the photos are provided.*

**@morningmango** [Photo] Tiny, cramped apartment makes a special 'workspace' mere myth, a thing I stretch boundaries to identify and capture. City life currently feels cramped, overpriced, unattainable. In your pages, I am without boundaries.

**@morningmango** [Photo] Constantly on those feet. Out that door early and in it late. Phones prohibited at the job, though I would not term it my 'workspace'. My real work is writing; tonight I am 'working' by inspiring myself with Maryse Conde's 'Desirada'

### *Missing & mobile workspaces*



*Figure 24. Missing & mobile workspaces*

**@magyar\_meringue** -- I don't have a dedicated work space to doodle with my pictures, but I spend a fair amount of time in random cafés.

**@joyjoyjodi** -- being an Art Ed. masters student I don't really get the chance to be creative per say... and because of my nomadic nature I haven't really established a "place" to be creative in... So taking a photo of "a place where I create" seemed impossible for me... so here's what I got, a picture of my head - my place where all my ideas come from, hence being my portable creative place. *Comments: @marjobourge -- love this!!*

**@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna** I don't have a work space right now. My home is in flux and dishevelment. I do find inspiration in this place. I walk by each day. A rented shop front transformed to a painting studio. Always changing. Never the same thing on the wall. *Comments: @paddleon -- Love those drawers... the warmth, orderliness... mystery... with a skateboard to top them off! Great space!!*

**@laurelhart** my workspace today isn't like my workspace every day. I was struggling with this assignment, because I have been running all over. I wanted to post another composite with 4 different images of workspaces, wishing I'd

snagged a pic of a lovely latte, a prof's office, tea time, my desk in a shared office, and more. My workplace might be my city, the Internet, my feet... #SaturdayInHerMind today I'm working at home and virtually at the musée d'art contemporain, which is really not far away, my mind is somewhere my body is not. I'm "live tweeting" the conference twitter handle laurelmhart if you want to see a few

*A workplace mix: School studios, outside galleries, cats & coffee*



Figure 25. A workplace mix: School studios, outside galleries, cats & coffee

@paddleon attempting tusche ground... too much water? Sloping floor doesn't make it easier!

Maire France Workplace. Waiting for my group to arrive.

@llangset Searching, but not finding. *Comments: @llangset -- The mysterious light or the equally mysterious shadow. She might even be my photo muse. [...]When I am sitting in the usual spot the reflections off the computer or phone dance across the floor. She chases them, but somehow they always get away. @llangset -- My workspace is often occupied, either by one or the other or both kitties. It is only fair that I give them credit for being my two muses.*

@elodiellilysamuelle My coffee and I ready to face the world

@livenow #sorryimsolate #SaturdayInHerMind #tiki #art #partofmyworkspace #workspace #retro #tikimug #cuba #flag Part of my favorite place to create.

Many of the women of *Her Mind's Eye* were excited about this theme, particularly those who had carved a little space for themselves in their own homes. There was also excitement to see what others were creating, where, and how. Perhaps for some, the theme was more challenging and a reminder of what was needed. For many of the women, photos showed space as a luxury within the urban environment, one that took time, money, interpersonal negotiation, and other forms of effort to secure. The photos also reveal how each has adapted her time and space in its creation.

We adapt by carving out a corner in a shared room, sneaking in a small personal creative moment at work, and finding time after work or on the weekend, in order to create physical/mental space and/or a refuge for visual and literary production. Some photos and comments suggest that although solutions have been applied, they are sometimes still falling short of the individual's needs or desires for a personal and devoted workspace. Also represented is a love for, or closeness with the home environment, representing how, for many women, having one's own home space equates to having space to do, and *to be* oneself.

### Theme #5: Stillness in Motion

This week's #SaturdayInHerMind theme and photo come from @morningmango whose challenge is to capture Stillness in Motion #HerMindsEye Comments: @marjobourge Nice one! @hannah\_nutwood Quite the challenge. Good topic! @a\_tornado\_named\_joanna Ohhhh... I think im going to have fun with this tricky one

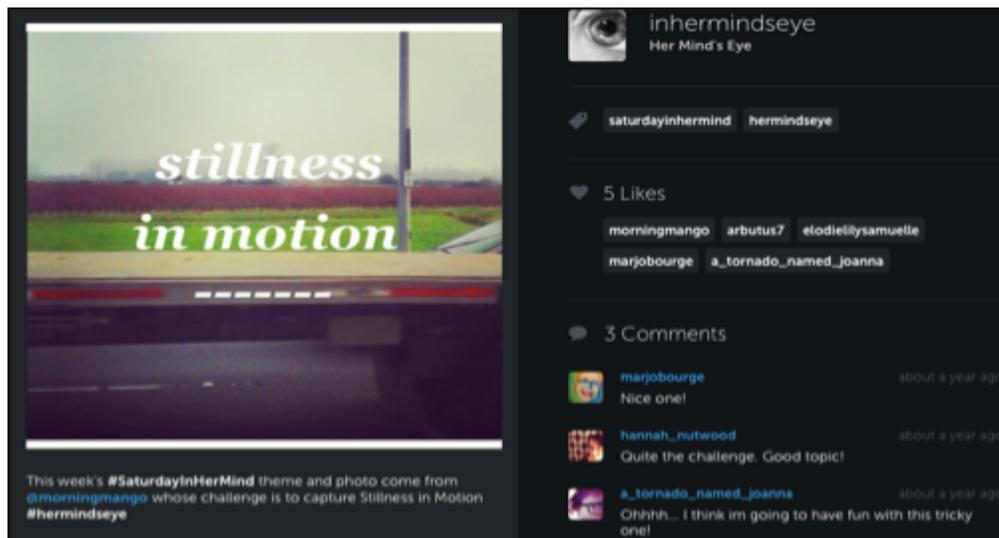


Figure 26. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no.5: Stillness in motion

From personal introductions, to explorations of our dreams and fears, we moved into a poetic focus that allowed for new aesthetic explorations and challenged our way to see and think about our surroundings. Perhaps it also gave us a break from soul-searching themes!

### Stillness in motion: Stories, memories, and moments in between



Figure 27. Stillness in motion: Stories, memories, and moments in between

**@morningmango** Mr. Big Stuff here caught my eye at lunchtime. Giant leaf finding rest in a sunny alcove while others dance in the wind. I like my coworkers, but always opt out of the crowded lunchroom in favour of a few moments of quiet. [followed by image 2]

**@morningmango** Waiting for my permanent residence interview. Pure nerves.

**@solelidad** Every time I see this vehicle, I think that if I had one of those last time in the jungle... I would've went so far, I'd still be there. #HerMindsEye #SaturdayInHerMind #stillinmotion #plateaumontroyal #walkingthecity

**Haley** Let's go for a walk! #HerMindsEye

### Stillness in motion: Frozen moments, poetry in daily life



Figure 28. Stillness in motion: Frozen moments, poetry in daily life

**@marjobourge** Stillness in motion for #HerMindsEye #SaturdayInHerMind @laurelhart The wind was blowing on this already fallen snow! #vscocam #vsco #igersmontreal #winter #snow #leaf #HerMindsEye #SaturdayInHerMind

**@hannah\_nutwood** My interpretation of this week's theme of stillness in motion. A crisp, cold night hovering around 0 degrees Celsius. "It's such a delight to live near a working river," the realtor had said. The log boom secured, awaiting its next incarnation. A heron wading in the shallows, anticipating its next meal. Distant lamplight reflecting on the surface, unseen currents coursing below. Such a delight.

**@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna** #SaturdayInHerMind stillness in motion. Still for so many years then plunk the keys and after the dust clears still again. #HerMindsEye

*Comment: @a\_tornado\_named\_joanna #editinginhermind snapseed*

### Stillness in motion: Visual play from poetic prompts

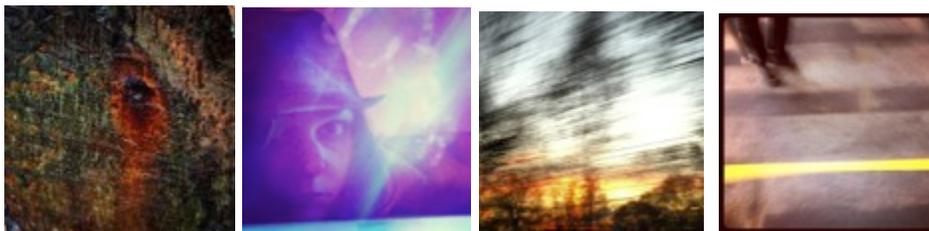


Figure 29. Stillness in motion: Visual play from poetic prompts

**@llangset** Stillness in Motion. #SaturdayInHerMind

**@joyjoyjodi** creepy pic taken with slow camera (app sucks btw, it doesn't save your pictures even when you say save. this was a screen capture). anyway it's for my stillness in motion... I'm still but the light is moving... sorry that's all I could come up with :/ #HerMindsEye #SaturdayInHerMind

**@paddleon** #HerMindsEye #SaturdayInHerMind

**@inhermindseye** Last chance to submit this weeks theme "Stillness in motion," also, we are in need of a new theme for today's #SaturdayInHerMind which will be posted tomorrow. Do you have a theme? Send me a message on Facebook or email, ideally with a picture to make into the theme poster (if you have one). [Part of this quote, which discusses other group plans and troubleshooting is presented under "logistics".]

The theme stillness in motion, decided upon by @morningmango, a poet and writer in our community opened our eyes to a visual-poetic interpretation of our environment. If poetry is, in a sense, a passion for life distilled into language, this explains why including a poetic prompt

infused such a mindful presence into our photography. Furthermore, stepping away from a more literal prompt provided an opportunity for experimentation. In a sense, both stillness and motion are concepts that can be conveyed through photography, and are both ideas that have fascinated painters and photographers for some time. In this sense, it was purely a visual instruction.

Integrating poetry and collaborating with a writer in the creation of photographic prompts helped to stretch our imagination and resulted in a collection of images that show aesthetic exploration, memory recollecting and personal storytelling, poetic/visual engagement with one's environment. At the same time, the complexity of themes, such as poetic themes, and how they might require the group member to see and think in different ways might have discouraged some members from participating, along with the short one-week deadline.

## CHAPTER 9. #SaturdayInHerMind: Mid-Stage

### *Introduction*

The second stage of #SaturdayInHerMind photographs occurred just before the halfway point of our group. These images seem to be moving from a self-representation or introducing orientation, as well as one of deeper inquiry, where participants post challenging topics intended to elicit further interpersonal knowledge. The themes oscillate from joy to *mirror mirror*, which calls for a “reality check.” From the beginning of *Her Mind’s Eye*, the women have been aware of stereotypes and popular modes of practice. While some of them are enjoyed, they are also questioned. In the mid-point, the themes continue to alternate between optimistic, aesthetic, critical, and urban-observant.

### *Theme #6: Joy*

*This week’s #SaturdayInHerMind theme invites us to look at the Joyous side of life! (Spoiler, the theme was neck and neck with stress... but ended in the lead!) I think this is a good challenge for me this week as I face some pressure. So let’s see your joy! [...] Of course I should add it coming to you from Haley.*



Figure 30. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no. 6: Joy

Arriving almost on the tails of "the love of your life" came the theme of joy, from Haley! What are the similarities and differences that these themes present? Both in our group, in participants' individual free photographic practices and in social media, there is often a tendency to focus on positive things. One tag used independently by some participants is #100daysofhappy. Occasionally, resources that are encouraging for women, or that are positive/inspiring for daily life are posted on the group's public Facebook wall, in addition to interesting photo, art, and social media resources. Anyone who is a member of the group is free to post there. Marie France and others questioned whether social media provokes a focus on positivity within our photography. Whether we present ourselves and our lives in an optimistic way, was later raised within in-person group meet ups, at the closing focus group, and was challenged within the themes #13 "the ugly photo" and #18 guilt, later to come. I would argue, however, that from the beginning, participants sometimes engaged with more difficult subject matter, even if in a gentle or joking manner. Just as in life, complex topics can be discussed lightly, while individuals remain aware of the significance of issues, and the subtleties of meaning present in the words chosen.

Even in deciding the theme of "Joy" itself, the issue of our daily feelings came up, as @joyjoyjodi posted half jokingly in response: "I was thinking stress, or down to the crunch..." I replied, "I usually try to bridge [suggested themes] together if there are two, see if there is a commonality, but I'm not sure what to do." Jodi said, "Ya, don't bridge them together." Yet I found a connection, suggesting: in that in times of stress, one may dream of a joyous time. Joanna picked up the theme, phrasing it as joy in the urban, while Jodi teased me for trying to connect the two, she wrote, "joy as procrastination" I jested that stress from the joy of procrastination leads to more tension! Joanna piped in "it's Joyful stress!" To get us to focus on the new theme, Haley posted a link to an article called "the 21 habits of supremely happy people." The article post and joyful theme received positive responses. @elodielilysamuelle called it "Awesome", while Marjolaine said, "I love that article! [...] I always tell people who ask me why I'm always happy that we're happier when we're happy." As can be seen in our group interaction, there remains an undeniable place for positivity as an occasional (if not frequent) feature of social media photography. Outside of boastful positivity, it's understandable that having positive interactions can help to cheer a dreary day, as does focusing on the joys in our lives!

### Joy! #HerMindsEyeCats



Figure 31. #HerMindsEyeCats

@livenow Bettie & Vero

@joyjoyjodi "joy" is rolled up and sleeping on a pile of laundry and/or dirty clothes and not having a care in the world...

@joyjoyjodi "joy" v.2

@hannah\_nutwood Joy! (Or is that bliss?)

### Joy! Hobbies & Celebration: Photography, Reading, Christmas



Figure 32. Joy! Hobbies & Celebration: Photography, Reading, Christmas

Maire France Gastown. Playing with filters.

@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna I feel behind in my photo taking this week. But this photo of Frida bring me joy

Haley Joy is curling up with a good story.

@elodielifsamuelle It was the night before the night before the n.... Before christmas! #SaturdayInHerMind #HerMindsEye #myjoyistocelbrate #christmas

### Joy! Joy within self, friendship & helping others



Figure 33. Joy! Joy within self, friendship & helping others

@marjobourge Joy... For this week's theme I chose to photograph a painting my good and talented friend

@galadrielle made of me! The first thing people say about me is that I'm always smiling and happy with a good attitude! #vsc0 #igersmontreal #montreal #painting #art #artislove #portrait

**@llangset** Softly spoken, behind the veil, a dance imagined, untangled and bold.

**@sarasramblings** This week joy came from the most tedious and unexpected of sources: an Excel spreadsheet. Blessed to have the opportunity to be a joy-maker, too!!

As was seen with the prior theme, once more, cats feature as an important part of some people's lives. Not only is joy experienced in the relationship between cat or pets and their owner, but also, joy is observed and appreciated in the cat's behavior. Secondly, there were two mentions of joy found through photographic practice, one being playing with filters and the second, finding joy in a good (or unusual) photo. Similarly, hobbies such as reading a book brought about joy, as did engaging in the activities related to celebrating Christmas. The last category of Joy began with two self-portraits, one painted by a friend, and the second modified from a fun moment on one of our photo walks. Joy is within. These were followed by **@sarasramblings**, who exclaimed that she found joy in "the most tedious and unexpected of sources." Through her work (and a very successful Excel spreadsheet), she was able to bring joy to the lives of others, which in-turn brought about joy for her

### ***Theme #7: Mirror Mirror on the Wall***

*Arriving a little late, but definitely worth the wait, this week's #SaturdayInHerMind theme and photo comes from @elodiellilysamuelle . The theme, called "mirror mirror on the wall" is a reality check: the things we are aware need improvements (in our lives or in our cities) #HerMindsEye I can't wait to play with this one.*

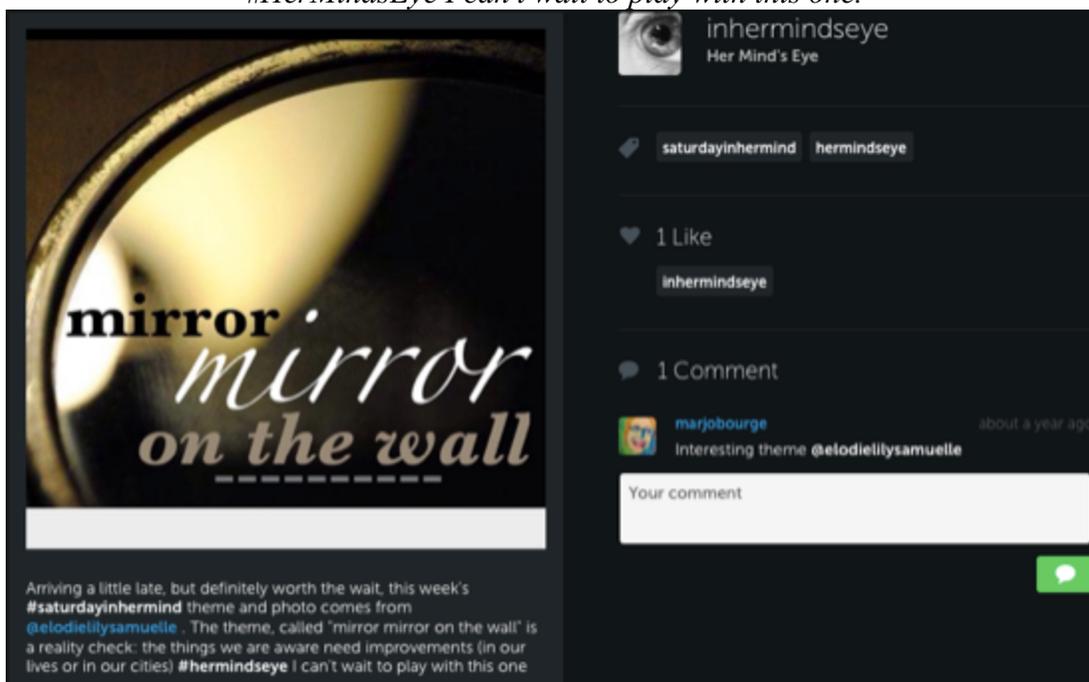


Figure 34. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no.7: Mirror mirror on the wall

As much as the theme of joy asked the women to investigate themselves and the sources of emotional well-being in their lives, *Mirror Mirror on the Wall* called for critical introspection. The key to the theme, I believe, was in the focus of needed improvements, both personally and in the city. (Though I believe the titling and poster image for the theme gave it a more individualistic focus.) Here are a few excerpts taken from one of our Facebook conversations, about taking ‘deeper’ or more honest photographs. These came alongside comments from several women explaining their difficulty taking photos due to having many responsibilities during the month, as well as weather and low-light problems (it becomes dark quickly, and the iPhone quality often couldn’t cope with low light). Within this Facebook discussion, we discussed apps to help with low light photography, and legalities around street photography.

Morning mango - Marie [France] raised some interesting points yesterday at the Vancouver photo walk along these lines....I guess I shy away from photographing things that might give a bad, if true, impression of me. I don't want to be judged for being messy or for prioritizing internet relaxation over vacuuming. I avoid pictures of people because I am unsure if it is ethical to photograph a stranger without their consent

Laurel - Also, I can confirm, you are not the only person to prioritize internet relaxation over tidying. \*caught\* \*side glance\* Maybe we should do a hashtag "my disgusting self" lol "the dark side" "reality check" ? I once started a tag in Instagram that was about things that disturb me in the city, because I thought that was important to talk about and missing. The photos are, well, kinda disturbing.

@elodielilysamuelle — oh I love internet relaxation! I love the idea of "reality check", I was thinking about this the other day, something like "mirror mirror on the wall" to point out the things that we cant avoid about realities

Laurel –Yesterday I was even glad that Joanna posted the 'long white doctors hallway' photo that I almost took and decided not to post myself. It is the reality. I wish now I'd taken it!

Laurel –If you are interested I could give you any tips you might need, so far I've asked people for photos and edited them into a theme poster. That reminds me... I have to create something about stillness in motion! It seems like an especially good theme since I feel like everything is motion despite often being still at a computer....

@elodielilysamuelle - you are welcome to claim this Saturday's new theme and even create a poster image for it if you like! I know you were asking about the app I used before.

@sarasramblings – Just quickly as I'm at work... Instagram is feeling like such a luxury right now. I'm realizing that art is the first thing to go when things get busy, but I'm wondering if it's one of the things I need the most in those moments!

### Advice, introspection, self-reflection



Video clip of Rubberband-dance, Place des Arts, Montreal.

Figure 35. Advice, introspection, self-reflection

@joyjoyjodi mirrormirror on the wall, who's the fairest one of all? if you are asking yourself this then maybe you don't fully love yourself. moral of the story, love yourself full force. Though not in the narcissistic way of course;)

@marjobourge My entry for #SaturdayInHerMind #HerMindsEye There are not a lot of things I wish to change about myself but the principal one is my lack of discipline, especially when it comes to artistic projects! The picture

is me starting to work on my Christmas cards! I decided to make them all by hand this year!

@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna How am I to fill this shadow?

@solelidad #livemontreal ! #SaturdayInHerMind : act without fear

### Reflecting on imperfection & the unfinished business of daily life



Figure 36. Reflecting on imperfection & the unfinished business of daily life

@sarasramblings When the going gets rough, the rough get messy.

@laurelmhart And of course, my polish chose the moment before the faculty holiday party to make its escape... #unavoidablefail

@elodieliysamuella Fill the space. Need canvas. Need to create. Empty frame.

### Mirror / reflection play



Figure 37. Mirror / reflection play

@paddleon #SaturdayInHerMind - mirror mirror #HerMindsEye

@hannah\_nutwood While I make a mad dash to get my Christmas cards done above, the cats peacefully snooze on the chairs below. It's a reflection, of sorts. #SaturdayInHerMind #HerMindsEye

@morningmango Never Outshone. Comment: @laurelhart – blinding lights? @morningmango moon at center

Once more, “Mirror, mirror” brought about a mix of categories that included, as some prior themes also showed, a focus on aesthetic play, as well as photographic reflections on daily life, characterized by immediacy. Additionally, images featured personal and introspective imagery that often included optimistic, encouraging and personal goal setting statements.

@morningmango’s photo played with the idea of mirroring with the car lights and the moon, showing that the moon (nature) was not outshone by a traffic-filled city, while at the same time

illustrating one moment from her life which she discussed on Facebook. Restatement in our Facebook group discussion pointed to time limitations due to her regular working and commuting schedule:

morningmango: I haven't taken many pictures the last couple weeks-except for yesterday's photo-walk, due to new schedule, long days, often driving so no cell usage on the road, and the dark, gloomy, early sunset nature of November. Most days I see work, home, road, and possibly grocery store. I don't take pictures of things I feel would be dull or monotonous. I figure no one wants to see the stack of unsorted papers on the table or full laundry hamper.

### ***Theme #8: Double/Double: Close-ups & Paths***

*Surprise! I propose that for the next two weeks of #SaturdayInHerMind we do a Canadian style "Double Double!" In addition to hunting for close ups (@llangset & @A\_tornado\_named\_joanna) since the weather has become suddenly ideal (both in central and western Canada) let's hunt for Paths as per @solelidad's suggestion.) This ties in well with yesterday's discussion of photography with a close-focus and wide focus. Now you can hunt for both! Two weeks! Two themes! I'll take a Double double, please...*

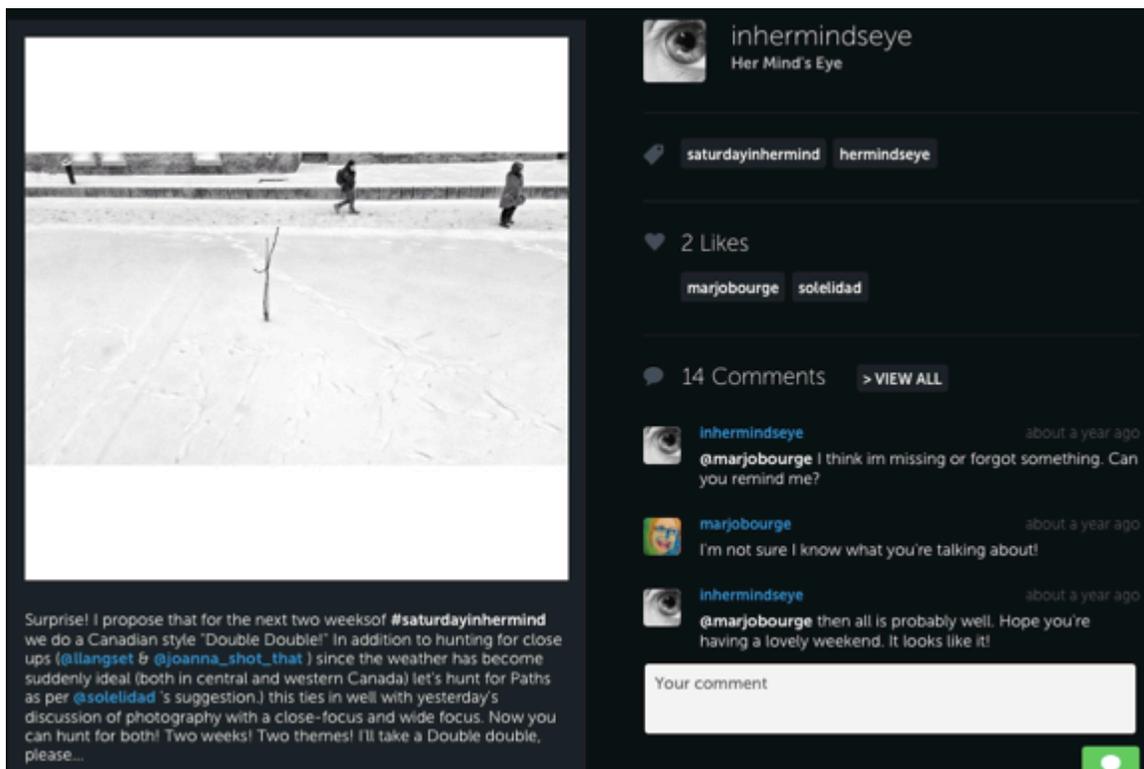


Figure 38. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no. 8 part 1: Paths

*Doubledouble! #SaturdayInHerMind #HerMindsEye  
(@A\_tornado\_named\_joanna for the feature close up!)*

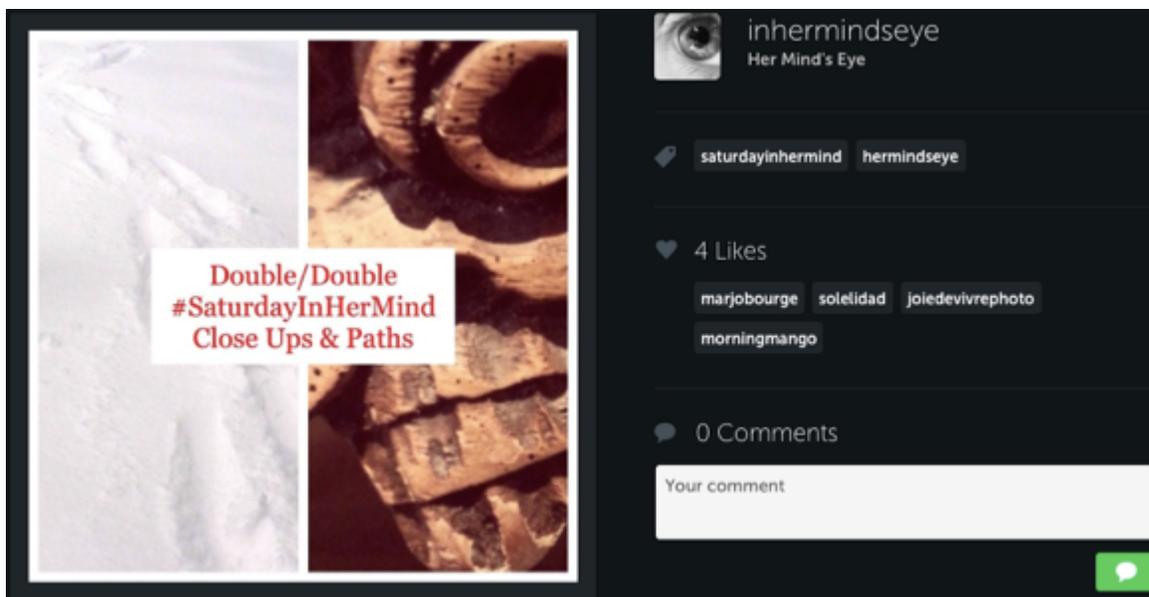


Figure 39. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no. 8: Double/Double

As winter progressed, submissions for #SaturdayInHerMind became fewer, and many of the participants found themselves busy with end-of-year obligations, holed up inside, hiding from winter's cold in Montreal, and from the dark, grey, everyday rainy wetness in Vancouver. Some became swamped with end of semester assignments. During one of our meet-ups, several participants mentioned that they found it difficult to go out, or were concerned about slipping on the ice. This is particularly true for women who have had prior accidents or health issues, and for women during pregnancy. Around this time, @soledidad suggested the theme of paths, while simultaneously, @a\_tornado\_named\_joanna proposed the theme of close-up. With the winter encroaching and a big snowfall hitting both the cities of Montreal and Vancouver, I ran outside to create a "path" in the snow and I snapped a photo to use for the announcement of the path theme. I was also very interested in the opportunity this would create for us to have similar physical weather-related experiences. I had hoped to create a connection between the two city groups. Paths are particularly important in winter weather; they also show our movement in the city, and can be seen as a metaphor for where we go and the choices we make in life.

While I had already posted the first theme of "paths," it seemed to me a good idea to experiment with giving more time and more options for photos, and I wanted also to encourage and include the excellent theme of close-up, which @llangset had offered to make another feature image for. @marjobourge also quickly offered to make the poster, but let @llangset take this one

over. This showed me that more members of the group were growing in their comfort with creating photos for our collective @inhermindseye announcement tags, and were also experimenting with and advancing in their skill with editing applications. These editing apps are third party photography applications downloaded from smartphone “app stores.” They have features such as text overlay, borders, filters (like Instagram), patterns, shapes, paper effects and more. We posted some of our thoughts about editing under the tag #editinginhermind.

*Theme: Double/double part 1, Pathways in snow*



Figure 40. Theme: Double/double part 1, Pathways

@paddleon pathways ... the train platform

@paddleon shadow's path @paddleon winter dance-step

@paddleon

@marjobourge Day 9 - This is the weather today! Beautiful snow and paths! #dec2013aphotoaday #decmonthpicturechallenge2013 #fmsphotoaday #vsco #vscocam #afterlight #igersmontreal #montreal #snow #winter #footprints Comments: @joyjoyjodi – Two birds with one stone! @marjobourge I took the picture and read about the doubledouble afterwards! It was a coincidence but a nice one! ☺

*Theme: Double/double part 1, Pathways in snow cont.*



Figure 41. Double/double part 1, Pathways in snow cont.

@llangset Wonder and wander

Maire France First snow, Van. Muffled sounds.

@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna it's not only us who have paths. Be safe furry friends and keep warm.

@elodieliylsamuelle The road less traveled #path #snowstorm #montreal

**Theme: Double/double part 1, Pathways in home and transit**

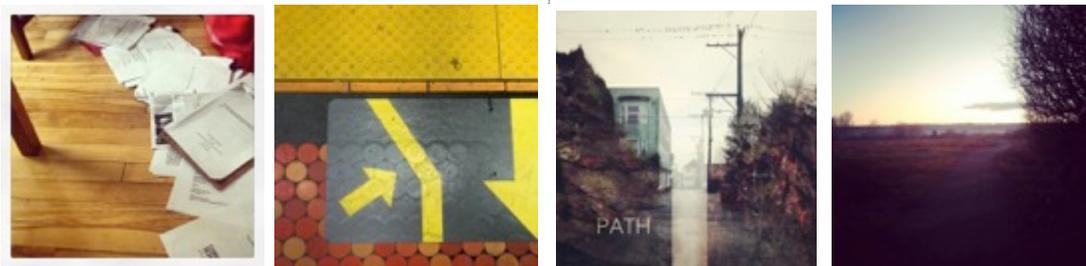


Figure 42. Double/double part 1, Pathways in home and transit

@joyjoyjodi my paper path...

@livenow LIONEL #path

@inhermindseye Have you found your #path in the city? #SaturdayInHerMind #doubledouble theme

@morningmango A week or so late but I finally found my #path. It led to sunset, and evening fog.

The theme of paths was a subject-specific theme, that could be interpreted metaphorically as well. The focus here was to creatively interpret the subject (such as @joyjoyjodi's path through the papers and @livenow's capture of a recognizable Montreal transit path), or to develop the image compositionally or in later edits in order to visually showcase the path. Examples of post-production include Joanna's image of the animal print, @paddleon's "winter dance step" and Lisa's snowy path. In addition, the photos show aspects of the women's own paths, in some cases presenting an answer to the question: "Have you found your #path?"

**Theme: Double/double part 2, Close up**

*Week two of the #SaturdayInHerMind #doubledouble getting in for the #closeup and stepping back to look at (or create) your own #path #HerMindsEye. Double the themes, double the time, double the fun... and a closeup up of the gum? Two ways to look at the world around you. It's exercise for your mind's eye. Comment: Photo by @llangset poster design also by @llangset*

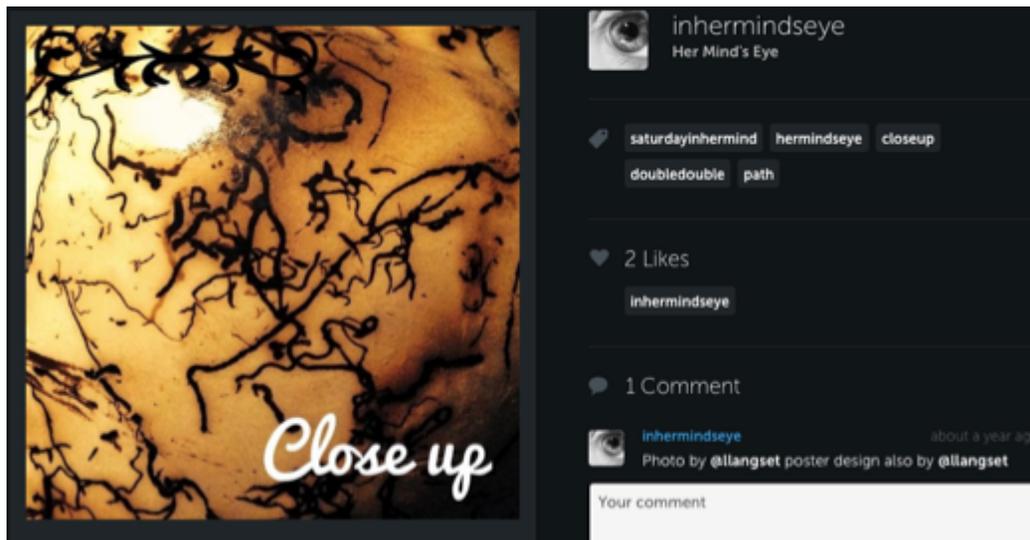


Figure 43. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no. 8 part 2: Close up

In addition to winter being a time when our paths are clearly marked, it's also a time when we were in closer proximity to the things near and dear to us. Winter is known as a time for introspection and examination of our lives and homes. What do we see close around us when we are looking carefully? What new things become beautiful or ugly? What is important, what do we focus on? What emerges from the snow? The personal and compositional focus of *close up* was a new avenue for playing with photography in the monotonous winter, when exploration outdoors was less frequent. It gave us a break from introspective themes of self-revelation and improvement. I felt that for the group to maintain good tempo and atmosphere, we needed to keep the balance between a critical eye and examination of our behavior, surroundings, and lives, and exciting and inspiring artistic/aesthetic challenges. Another developing skill seen in group members' posts is their growing use of tags, beyond those we had collectively created for our group. Members are learning from each other how to connect with additional groups, find like interests, and to tag their photos representationally (for content), such as the tag: #Christmasgift. Winter is also a time for experimenting, learning things, and exploring creative craft indoors.

#### Close up: Home & special objects



Figure 44. Close up: Home & special objects

@laurelmhart Luck is to be growing together. #home #community

@laurelmhart (image 2) Mulled wine #mtlwinter #staywarm #closeup

@paddleon macro, not altered

@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna #SaturdayInHerMind #warmth

#### Close-up: Home & special objects cont.



Figure 45. Close up: Home & special objects cont.

@hannah\_nutwood What... what have I wrought? #christmasgifts #closeup

@joyjoyjodi close up. condensation on my window Comments: @paddleon Yikes! I was thinking about your

windows earlier today... sorry to see things haven't improved @marjobourge Beautiful but bad!!!! @joyjoyjodi @paddleon @marjobourge they're new windows too! just put in last October! @paddleon guaranteed? @joyjoyjodi I rent so all I can do is tell the superintendent. anyway it's not bothering me so I'll just deal with it. :) @paddleon well.. gives you humidity...

@elodielilysamuelle The little pretty things (snowflake emoji)

@marjobourge Close-up for #SaturdayInHerMind #HerMindsEye #igersmontreal #christmas #cookies #gingerbread #frosting #snowflakes #vsco #vscocam

### Close-up – Surroundings, neighbourhood appreciation



Figure 46. Close-up – Surroundings, neighbourhood appreciation

@livenow #closeup #SaturdayInHerMind #spraypaint #tag #tafactory #igersmontreal

@laurelmhart #Vancouver palette.

@morningmango intricate designs. #HerMindsEye #SaturdayInHerMind

@morningmango The forest on the tree. #HerMindsEye #SaturdayInHerMind #mosslove

### Close-up – Photographic exploration & focused activities

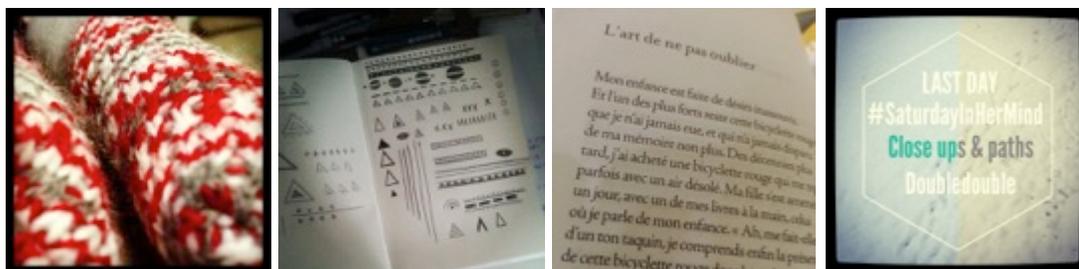


Figure 47. Close-up – Photographic exploration & focused activities

@sarasramblings My #closeup on little Christmas monkey feet!! Christmas on the brain. #HerMindsEye #SaturdayInHerMind Tried the Camera + tip, it helped but I'm definitely still learning! *Comments:* @inhermindseye Nice! I can see the difference that camera + made! @sarasramblings Yes! I was very excited to play around with this little feature

@livenow Samedi brainstorm #brainstorming #africain #texture #illustration #SaturdayInHerMind #closeup #path #onmywaytoanewproject

Haley Dany Laferriere. L'art presque perdu de ne rien faire. Close up. #holidayreading #childhoodmemory #HerMindsEye #SaturdayInHerMind Comment: @solelidad Cet homme! (Clapping emoji + hearts emoji)

@inhermindseye Get your theme photography on! Comment: @inhermindseye Tip: try the app Camera + to be able to focus on a precise area and adjust the exposure based on a different area in the photo.

Reflecting on the close-up part of the double/double theme, it's possible that the close-up theme was easier to engage with, as it didn't require intersection and preplanning, or, for one to

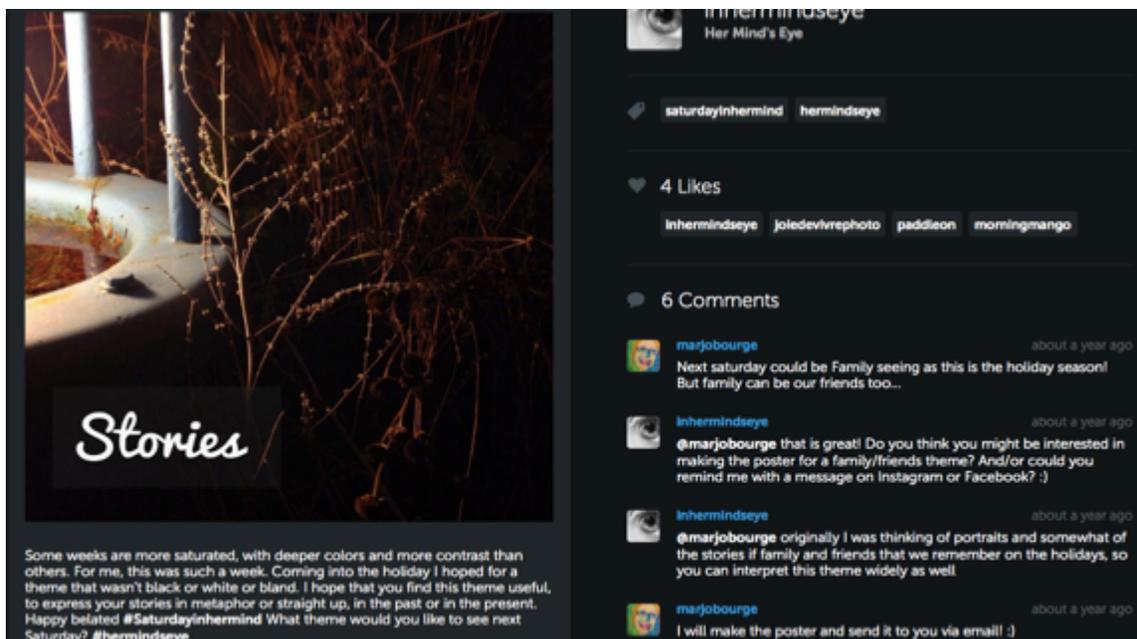
find a metaphor or discover a personal connection with the theme. The theme enabled free visual exploration of the subjects around oneself. Having a technical focus allowed group members almost complete freedom in their choice of content and subject. This factor, maybe unintentionally, also provides insight into matters of importance; an intuitive searching and finding of carefully selected textures and small visual joys, and significant objects. Perhaps this technical focus permits one to consider subjects visually, intuitively, and emotionally without feeling the need to fit into a prescribed framework.

Such minute focus on one's environment is revealed in @joyjoyjodi's image of the condensation on her window. Although Jodi responded that her image created aesthetic appreciation for the subject in mind, it brought about many comments revealing other group members' understanding about problems with old Montreal buildings and landlords, and their concern for her well-being. This beautiful visual scene also carried with it a message. In this tiny moment, (you can follow the comments above), you can also see the growing connection between members, and our care for one another.

While other themes may stretch group members to advance their abilities to present ideas in the form of an image, or explore metaphors, for example, close-ups provided a chance to practice a style of framing the image, and perhaps to improve on one's photographic technique, as can be seen in the image (and comments) above in @sarasramblings image. Many of the close-ups were like little love portraits, focusing on small moments of importance, and ordinary objects of significance. Micro-beauty in the everyday: a Christmas gift (i.e., many woolens were present, created by individuals and signifying warmth, history and wear), also visually interesting environmental features (ice crystals glowing on the window, condensation drops, leaves, graffiti), and activities in close range (a focus on designing in a sketchbook, or reading something special.) "Close-up" enabled not only visual focus, but also acute mental focus on one's immediate surroundings, allowing for selection of a feature of importance to explore visually.

### ***Theme #9: Stories***

*Some weeks are more saturated, with deeper colors and more contrast than others. For me, this was such a week. Coming into the holiday I hoped for a theme that wasn't black or white or bland. I hope that you find this theme useful, to express your stories in metaphor or straight up, in the past or in the present. Happy belated #SaturdayInHerMind What theme would you like to see next Saturday*



#### . 48 Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no. 9: Stories

##### From group Facebook chat message, December 27, 2013

Laurel – Happy Holidays! Don't forget to tag your photos #hermindseye & keep connected to the group by commenting and adding likes! In case you missed it, the #saturdayinhermind theme for this week is Stories. You can tell stories visually through your photos, or take photos that are metaphoric or possibly highlight details of your story, and tell more of the story through comments and tags! The sky's the limit! Your story can be secret or historic, imagined or shared. This coming Saturday will be a new theme. Looking forward to January photo walks! It was great getting to see so many of you in person this December! *Comments: Joanna – Awesome sauce! Sarah – That sounds like a story ...*

The theme and poster for “Stories” was created by me. At this time, many of us were busy with holidays, so submissions were less frequent. Once more, I was hoping to connect our themes with the activities of group members and I was interested in using photos and textual accompaniment as a prompt that might inspire thoughtful and intriguing photographic contributions with content that connects us emotionally, and as a community. I believe strongly in the power of storytelling, and the importance of women’s stories being told. This time, as there were not so many submissions, and differing themes were present, I didn’t organize the images into sub-categories.

##### Stories: Memory and silence



Figure 49. Memory and silence

**@morningmango** Family, without. #HerMindsEye #SaturdayInHerMind #stories #rememberyou

**@hannah\_nutwood** The Church Gresley & Linton gave out nice parting gifts. #clock #heirloom *Comments:*

**@hannah\_nutwood** I believe this was given to her when she left Scotland with her husband for missionary work in India.

**@morningmango** The 'reuse, rejoice' was beautiful. The For Lease sign sad. Organic store failed or relocated. *Comments @inhermindseye Urban observation*

### Stories: Living memory



Figure 50. Living memory

**@paddleon** We won tickets to The Vinyl Café, such a beautiful tradition Stuart has... and the stories! 20 years they are celebrating, and in great style tonight with Stuart McLean and John Sheard, Dennis Pendrith, and the Good Lovelies... You can hear Vinyl Café on CBC on weekends...

**@marj Bourge** I don't know about you guys but in my family, we have 2 stomachs... One for food and one for dessert! #HerMindsEye #SaturdayInHerMind #vscocam #abeautifulmess #igersmontreal #food #dessert #christmas

**@morningmango** Specially baked vegan butter tarts. She loves me. #SaturdayInHerMind #stories #HerMindsEye

**@joyjoyjodi** Stories - last weeks topic... sorry I'm late... this is a negative scan I took with my phone scanner. it's of my late grandfather when I graduated from a textiles course in 2001. his favorite piece of mine was a baby quilt I made. the quilt sold, and I'm wondering now where it is... *Comments: @paddleon phone scanner & negative scan? Sounds fun!! @paddleon I love that your grandfather's favourite piece was a baby quilt! I wonder if it brought back memories of his children @inhermindseye (I was late too, also it's never too late)*

The stories portrayed were often about family, one's community or neighbourhood, and personal memories. Sarah opens with stories learned collectively (on the radio), followed by @morningmango's personal moments/stories, community stories in the form of landmarks and shared experiences, and @hannah\_nutwood's personal family history found in heirlooms. @marj Bourge shows her family through food, and Jodi scanned an old negative and revisited a personal family memory. Additionally, a photo of a closed store front serves as the backdrop as @morningmango tells a story of her community and lifestyle influenced by the closing of the local business that appeared to have striven towards the values of 'reuse, rejoice.'

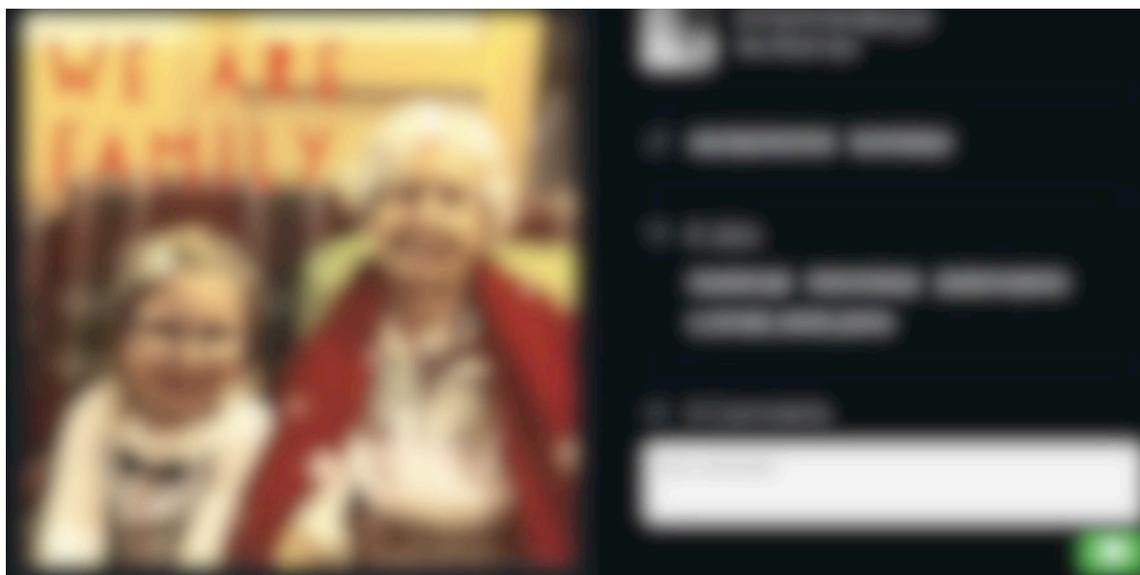
It seems that as the group developed, and became more capable, they were less in need of me to lead and make decisions and guide them. This of course is many teachers' dream! The only difficulty is recognizing when and where to step back and let others take over. I realize that my tendency is to worry about not doing enough, rather than to be cautious about doing too much for the group. At the same time I was always concerned about other people's schedules, and whether

group members were feeling overwhelmed with the time taken participating in the group. I didn't want anyone to become exhausted or feel that being a member of the group was too demanding for them. This concern came from my recognition of the power relationship, and perhaps heightened sense of responsibility, that may be present for a group member who has agreed to also participate in research. The "Stories" theme took place during the holiday period, when people had changing routines, and more free time, that, perhaps ironically, was more occupied with travel and the holidays. I recall that at this time I wanted to give the women a bit of a break, and so I avoided sending out reminders for the theme this week. In a Facebook message from December 27<sup>th</sup> I wrote:

You can tell stories visually through your photos, or take photos that are metaphoric or possibly highlight details of your story, and tell more of the story through comments and tags! The sky's the limit! Your story can be secret or historic, imagined or shared.

***Theme #10: We are Family***

*This week's #SaturdayInHerMind theme and photo (and Family!) comes from @marjobourge  
What or who is family to you? I'm missing you all over the holidays!*



*Figure 51. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no. 10: We are family*

The theme "We are Family" was developed by @marjobourge, who created the poster image using a photo she had taken of two family members. (Blurred, to protect the privacy of these individuals.) Last week, when I posted the "Stories" on Instagram, Marjolaine replied to the "Stories" post in the comment section with her idea for this week's theme. In the discussion above, you can see that I mention @marjobourge in my reply, as Instagram then alerts her of my reply. As Marjolaine had offered (and enjoyed) creating a previous poster, I invited her to create

this poster, she completed swiftly! There were many responses to her theme.

### Coming together: from near and far

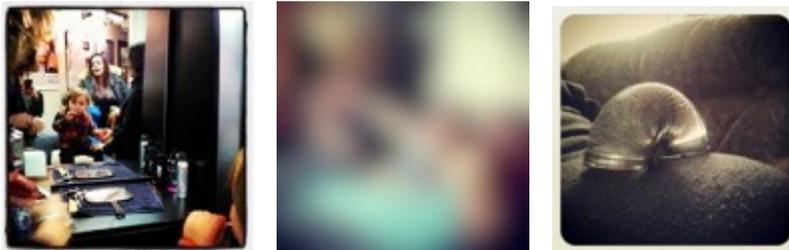


Figure 52. Coming together: from near and far

**@joyjoyjodi** Family. I'm doing this weeks topic now because I won't be seeing my family anymore until August. here's a picture of my mother, sister, cousin, nephew and myself gathered around my nephew getting his first haircut at the salon my cousin works on Christmas Eve... we looked pretty ridiculous all gathered around a 2 year old getting his haircut who was oblivious to what was happening probably because he was concentrating on his sucker or my mothers iPhone.

**@paddleon** Family at New Year's, watching hockey classic

**@morningmango** Poised for action: mini slinky contemplates its next move from my fella's post-dinner tummy.

### The family we choose: Creating connections



Figure 53. The family we choose: Creating connections

**@laurelmhart** Sometimes family is about blood ties, and sometimes it is about those who will dance with you in good times and bad. **@marjobourge**

**@hannah\_nutwood** There is the family you're born into and then there is the family that you choose

**@sarasramblings** #Family for me is blood and not blood (and possibly wearing matching shirts). I feel like I won the lottery with my quirky wonderful biological fam, & have adopted or been adopted by many others along the way.

### Food as memory, culture, and mealtime rituals



Figure 54. Food as memory, culture, and mealtime rituals

**@morningmango** I lost track of whether this week was family, story, or family story. This is a little collage of making cerasee, much-used bush tea. Both my Jamaican and Bahamian grandmothers boiled the bitter brew for everyday health. It grows wild on our fence back home. Mummy passed a stash to me in that very sketchy looking foil package. I steeped up a cup to help combat a cold. My blood family is all far away. Small rituals and shared traditions make me feel like I do come from somewhere, remind me that I am someone with a history and with roots. #SaturdayInHerMind #HerMindsEye #cerasee #bushtea #islandlifeabroad

**@solelidad** My Mamie's tea cup, at my uncle's place during the holidays. Cozy and warm #SaturdayInHerMind #nofilter #candlelight #chaitea #megantic #montmegantic #valracine#quebec #igersquebec #igersmtl#igersmontreal

**@marjobourge** Family for #SaturdayInHerMind #HerMindsEye : There is the family life chose for us and the family we choose for ourselves! Both are important but the one I chose is so much more special to me! This morning, I had breakfast with a soul-sister! What a great time I had @livenow! #vsco #vscocam #afterlight #igersmontreal #breakfast #brunch #healthy #homemade #organic *Comments: @marjobourge merci beaucoup pour ce beau brunch et je suis fiere detre ta soul-sister! :) je suis heureuse de te connaitre et ca fait toujours du bien a lame de se voir!*

**@paddleon** Best meat pies, Thomas!!

Taking place over the holiday, the theme of family highlighted the importance of coming together, not only with our biological family, but also with our supporters. This includes “soul-sisters,” and communities that consider us as one of their own. The photos depict travel and mobility; a reality for many Canadians. It is a time when many return home, it is a pilgrimage to our roots. We travel to spend time together, mothers and children, brothers and sisters. It is a time of finding our place with in-laws, and families within families. For those who could not travel home, we practiced family rituals of place and memory, and recall who we are through what we now keep with us. Also represented is the importance of food to family gatherings. A teacup brings back memories; we relax, and partake in collective culturally connected food rituals. Veganized-versions of famous family tarts show special care taken for a special new someone. Although I have grouped the above photos under headings, many of the photos overlap. The slinky on @morningmango’s fella’s tummy references food, as well as returning home after coming together with extended family. It shows the connection to food and ritual, and the family who we choose for ourselves. To carry the metaphor forward, “fullness” might represent not only our physical needs being filled, but also our needs for roots, connection, community and performing traditions that revolve around the table. As such, the meat pies shown by @paddleon build upon her preceding picture of the kids coming home for the holidays, as this recipe, preparation, and feast of meat pies is a tradition that comes together with her son.

### Theme #11: New Year, New Projects

This week's #SaturdayInHerMind theme comes from @paddleon ! New year - new projects!  
What do you have planned?

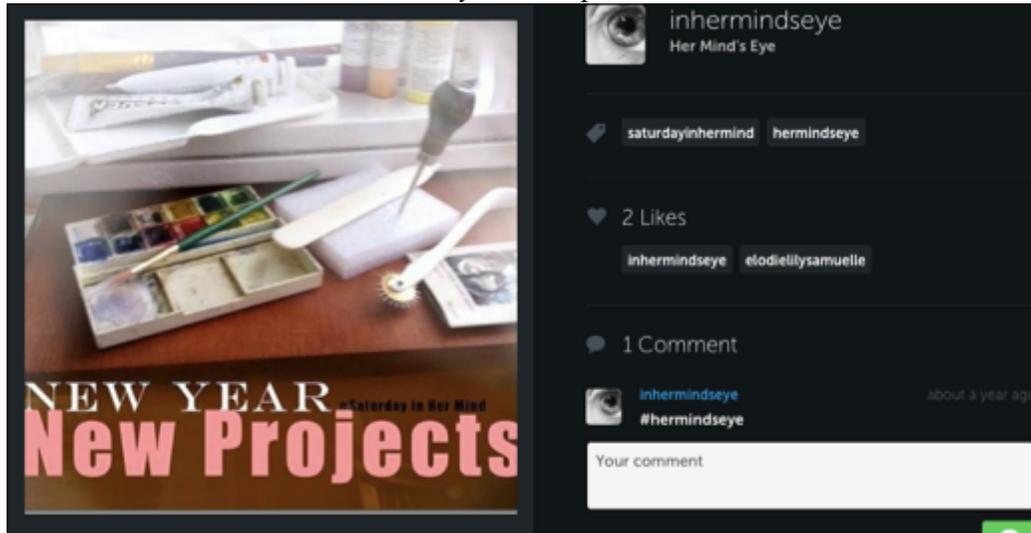


Figure 55. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no.11: New Year, New Projects

### Art projects & creative craftsmanship



Figure 56. Art projects & Creative craftsmanship

**@marjobourge** My new creative adventure this year... Taking bookbinding classes! Loving it! #SaturdayInHerMind #HerMindsEye #vscocam #afterlight #bookbinding #handmade #learningnewthings #justlikemygreatgrandpa  
Comments: @llangset Now I know who to ask. @laurelmhart Wow! Where is this? I thought maybe you could give a class. I would love to learn about your great grandpa, too! @llangset @laurelmhart I'd gladly show you though I'm not well equipped at home! I'm planning on buying a few things though! :) The place where I take my class is in the Mile-End and is called La Tranchefile! Today was my first class!

**@hannah\_nutwood** My first project of the new year: lining this old typewriter case.

**@paddleon** looking for references to seigneurial system

**@joyjoyjodi** this semesters pilot project... wouldn't you like to know what I'm doing ;) it's a secret right now.  
Comments: Haley Looks playful!!

### Planning, researching, and living

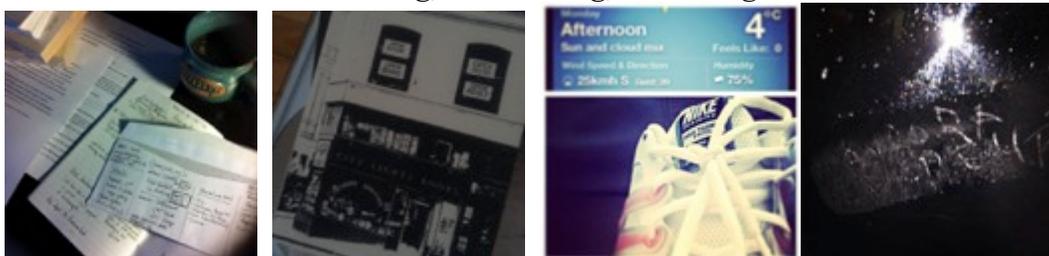


Figure 57. Planning, researching, and living

@paddleon new year, new projects!

**Haley** Open door. Open mind. Open books. Open heart. #citylightsbooks #writing #journal *Comments: Haley New year, new projects! @solelidad So good ! Love it ! Haley A new writing book from san francisco.*

@elodielilysamuella It's a good day to have a good day #thisyearsproject

@laurelmhart The beginning of our story looked something like this, with a frozen tattoo/side sticker for a mechanical friend and much appreciated rear-warmers #story #memory #documentation #adventure #yolo (embarrassed to use that tag) #montreal --- there are so many projects that are difficult or dull to capture on film. Right now is the time of deadlines, paper, paperwork... What is missing in seeing papers or digital documents is the feeling of uncertainty, risk taking, giving myself over to the adventure, mystery and unknown of life. My world gets larger. I say "yes" instead of no, dance with systems, family, work, life, death, light, darkness... [...] *Comments: @llangset The future is always uncertain. It is though we are all on the edge. Will we be brave and bold? I see you as a great traveller.*

The submissions for the new year/new projects tag were not as many as usual, but it is in keeping with what became a decline in submissions for the weekly themes. It seems that in the New Year, and overall, the weekly pace was difficult to keep up, particularly as exhibition planning joined the mix. Participants would often submit their Saturday theme image within the following week, which led to confusion identifying which theme the image was created for. This demonstrated their desire to participate, despite time concerns. In a Facebook message, Veronique told me: “What I like the best is the motivation it [each theme] [...] even if I’m often late to take my picture, it’s a good challenge.” The themes here for “New year, new projects” fit generally into the overarching category of artistic/craftsmanship related projects and, less clearly, tasks, research and resolutions. In the arts/crafts category, the first two photos represent projects that were conducted independently or in the community, such as joining a bookbinding workshop, and a home project: a challenge to breathe new life into an old typewriter case. The latter two posts from our arts-students showed their research for upcoming artworks. University studies in fine arts initiate artistic action, as does community programming and personal projects. At the University, right on schedule, new projects begin with the start of a new semester!

## CHAPTER 10. #SaturdayInHerMind: Final Stage and closing reflection on the themes

### *Introduction*

Photographs represented in the final stage of our #SaturdayInHerMind themes diverge from emotional or personal themes, as by this point we came to know each other much better. The first theme of collage, then, represents an aesthetic challenge – a return to interest in the medium, following the prior interest in the community members. This became the group's orientation as we prepared for our exhibition. Topics of self and emotion gave way to the excitement of creating.

### **Theme #12: Collage**

*From Véronique! The #SaturdayInHerMind theme this week is collage! As usual, if you haven't gotten last week's new projects theme completed, see if you can post, and get ready for a new creative theme this week! Comments: @laurelhart Thank you for this week's beautiful poster!*



Figure 58. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no.12: Collage

Véronique (@livenow) came up with the theme of collage, and created a poster using mobile phone applications for editing photos. She and I had been chatting on Facebook after she told me that she wouldn't be able to attend one of the January meetings. I asked her if she had any ideas that she wanted to share with the group, and she mentioned her like of the #SaturdayInHerMind challenges, and proposed a few ideas, from which she selected collage. An hour and a half later, she sent this lovely image to me through Facebook, within our chat exchange. This the poster and others, demonstrates how the posters for each theme were in themselves grounds for

experimenting with editing applications. During weeks when the task of creating the theme promotion image fell to me, I tried to challenge myself and demonstrate the possibilities and capabilities of different smartphone editing applications. Occasionally, participants asked me for recommendations, and inquired as to which applications I used.

### Collages made in mobile photography apps & Photoshop



Figure 59. Collages made in mobile photography apps & Photoshop

**@marjobourge** Yesterday meant 3 months with my amazing boyfriend! Funny how time goes so fast yet I feel like I've known him a lifetime already! #abeautifulmess #hands #love #datenight #thisguymakesmelaulghsomuch #imtheluckiestgirlintheworld

**@elodielilysamuella** Today's helper #SaturdayInHerMind #HerMindsEye #guitar #music

**@paddleon** One of three submissions to Art Souterrain's Postal Art project *Comments: @llangset Looks vaguely like a bridge falling down. @paddleon that's the feeling I get... @inhermindseye No kidding! An accurate portrayal of the sensation montreal's overpasses create @paddleon Wow, thanks! The theme is Foundations @inhermindseye I also find your cross-media usage interesting - building the photo collage in Photoshop and photographing from the screen*

### Found Collages



Figure 60. Found Collages

**@llangset** Found in the neighbourhood for #SaturdayInHerMind #HerMindsEye *Comments: @llangset #stikkipeaches @llangset Tagline "What if art ruled the world?" Stikki Peaches @llangset More from an interview with the artist S.P. "... Art heals, inspires, influences, changes, lasts, or doesn't, but its seen across the universe from different eyes and minds, telling different stories, here's mine..." [in response to a comment] @llangset Art can start a conversation and keep it going. I wanted the world to know the what, why, and where. I am sometimes just the medium.*

**@joyjoyjodi** this is for the collage theme from last week, very late... it's a small collage one of my students did in class. I had nothing to do with it. take it as you will. #HerMindsEye #SaturdayInHerMind @laurelmhart I'm still working on the collage theme as well. Curious What age / environment was the student ? @joyjoyjodi 17 years old I think. a few if them were just going through magazines and cutting out heads and attaching them to different bodies.

**@laurelmhart** In a way, this is sortof a collage - arriving late for last weeks' #SaturdayInHerMind theme. I found it interesting how beautiful women were on the cover for almost every magazine whether the magazine was designed for women or for men. When I was a teenager I loved magazines for teenage girls. Now, this is the type of magazine I purchase once in awhile. Still I was wondering if they intend to design this technologically oriented magazine towards men. What would a tech women's magazine look like, if like this one, it managed to avoid having beautiful

women on the cover? #HerMindsEye

The theme of collage was a challenge for many. It seemed to require knowledge, proficiency, or self-teaching in the area of use of smart-phone photo blending applications. This also meant time. Even when one had such proficiency, it required time to think of and construct an image. I believe it also required understanding of the art term “collage,” and how it might be explored digitally and photographically. Again, at this point we had the problem of a bit of a backlog, where some women were still trying to catch up with prior week’s themes.

Several of the submissions for this theme came in a bit late, and those submissions received came mostly from those who had an existing background in the arts. Perhaps this weekly challenge demonstrated where deviations in capabilities and prior practice with the fine arts and photography could serve as a hindrance to some members’ participation. For those with some professional background (such as schooling in fine art) or prior experience such as pre-iPhone amateur photographers, or those who already had self-guided learning with Instagram, social media photography applications are rather easy to pick up. Many of these applications build upon/draw from analogue photographic traditions (such as having features for dodging and burning, and exposure adjustments), and popular computer-based editing programs like Photoshop. While some members mentioned that a workshop which focused on how to use editing apps would be useful, others were more interested in a softer, co-learning approach. This is where, at the beginning, I had thought that the blog might fill a gap, however I found that it was under-used, and a workshop in person is a very different, hands-on experience creating.

Haley was new to Instagram, and was especially interested in learning more about photographic practice as an art form. She had a longstanding love for exploring creativity and art in many forms, and enjoyed photography as a hobby since childhood. From the outset of the group, Haley expressed her desire to further develop her photographic skillset. In our focus group she explained: “I like when we meet in person.” Resonating, with Veronique’s earlier statement about perhaps arranging workshops, she expressed interest in having a, “specific workshop, [...] Because it can be overwhelming if it’s just in the middle of like a conversation. and ‘Oh yeah, I’m editing this,’ and then, you know, we’re talking about other things... [...] But a specific workshop, because it’s like for me, I’m not professional.” Joanna went a step further, pointing out the possibility that participation in social media photography might be a gateway to further artistic education, adding, “I would like to have like a professional photography class!” In

response to the suggestion that we could have regular Saturday workshops, and my statement that I felt it wouldn't have worked for us as a group, Lisa concurred. She explained her view of our group's learning style: "No, I think I think there's a timing, I think there's a context [...] I think were all sort of in for this non-classroom, [...] where it's really collaborative." Discussing Lisa's statement, the women considered how they learned techniques and more through participation in *Her Minds Eye*, some recognized that they could play a more active roll in teaching and seeking out knowledge from each other. Joanna added, "these are our learning experiences!"

"But we could do that more" Marjolaine agreed, "Marjolaine – yeah we could do that." Haley then explained more of what she wanted to know: "But now, after the art show, I really want to know how people did the four photo frame thing, I'm sure it's really simple, but I don't know how, [...] so I [was] motivated: 'that looks really cool!'" to which Lisa enthusiastically responded "I can help!" Despite differing experience levels overall, group members agreed that together they learned and benefited from being a part of the group.

Veronique - Yeah, and sometimes if you're new to this, you don't know. If I don't know how to do that...

Laurel – But you learn. Haley – That's it. Laurel – So we did! [learn] Haley – That was really the main thing...

Haley **gasps!** (happy discovery sound) Haley – I should, I should've thought about that!

Jodi – we learned every day. [I learned] ...when I had to.

### Theme #13: The Ugly Photo

*Or the 'ugly step sister' or the 'ugly side of life' – what don't you normally post, and why? This challenge comes from Maire France* Comments: @hannah\_nutwood Great idea [Marie France]! I loved that you brought it up on our last photo walk. It's a thought provoking topic that gives the artist a lot of freedom in their interpretation. Maire France Who will DARE?? [...] As I was saying, daring to take/post the ugly pic is difficult. We are always concerned about other gazes. Yet, having it as a theme is easier. Have fun!



Figure 61. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no.13: The Ugly Photo

The idea for the ugly photo came from Maire France in Vancouver, who was very interested in challenging traditional social media photography practices, which she saw as generally being a performance that excludes the depicting of unpleasant imagery. Her excitement for the theme of “the ugly photo” was vivid in her comment: “Who will DARE?!” This theme came at the end of January, and was discussed at length in December when I met with the Vancouver group in person. This lively discussion happened with Vancouver members, despite their infrequent gatherings. It might demonstrate the value of the presence of a group facilitator to conduct group meetings. As facilitator, when important topics arose in the group, I was able to ensure that these, as well as questions and issues important to the values and needs of the community (as well as to research) were discussed and expanded upon. Although I had tried to bring up these issues from afar, via Facebook, matters were not deeply discussed until we were all together in person. Here are group members’ responses to Maire France’s theme of “the ugly image.”

### Beauty, body, image quality



Figure 62. Beauty, body, image quality

**@hannah\_nutwood** Who is that STUNNING blonde?! *Comments: @hannah\_nutwood aaand I just saw the challenge for this week's #SaturdayInHerMind ... I think I nailed it! @inhermindseye Lol -- stunning isn't ugly! Your smiling face brought me great cheer this morning.*

**@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna** my #ugly scars on my hands. I can find #beauty in the well worked bumps, twists and knots.

**@joyjoyjodi** silly bathroom talk. how can you forget what is beautiful when beauty is in the eye of the beholder?

**@laurelmhart** Just in time, my #museumselfie from MOMA - looking through Duchamp - To Be Looked at (from the Other Side of the Glass) with One Eye, Close to, for Almost an Hour. *Comments: @laurelmhart since this isn't clear and crisp and a high quality photograph, is it an ugly picture? What makes a photo beautiful or ugly? What makes it meaningful? What is lost when all photos are made to be beautiful? What aren't we showing/telling/seeing? Are we missing something important?*

### Undesirable urban, mess, and lovely, “ugly”, homey objects

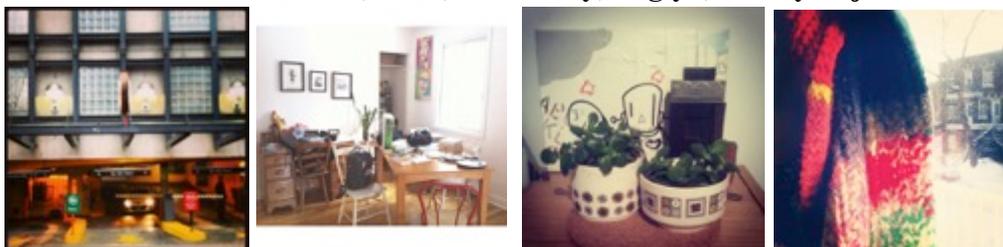


Figure 63. Undesirable urban, mess, and lovely, “ugly”, homey objects

**@arbutus 7** Gastown. #uglypicture What makes an ugly pic? The subject, style, filter? *Comments: @laurelmhart Or not consistent with the online identity we try to create? Maire France Yep...very good point Laurel! There's another paper for you to write! @laurelmhart I remember this place. It's interesting that when you take an ugly pic it may be identifying places in our environment that are uncomfortable.*

**@marjobourge** What my place looks like right now! Today was for bookbinding and relaxing... Tomorrow is a new day and will be for cleaning! #vsco #vscocam #afterlight #igersmontreal #myflatisnotalwayspicandspan #actuallyitseldomis

**@livenow** #rwk #robotswillkill #igersmontreal #newyork #artist #illustration #canvas #texture #collage #layer #SaturdayInHerMind #plants #retro #vintage #typography #woodtype #press #succulents

**@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna** Around 12 years ago I asked my Gramma to #knit me a scarf from her scraps of wool. I've worn that long colourful thing in and out of winters past sometimes forgetting about it for a few years. Today I decided to retire it for good. Our theme of warmth this week made me reflect on how warm and safe these now moth eaten mismatched bits of #wool have carried me. #Goodbye. #saturdayinhermind #hermindseye

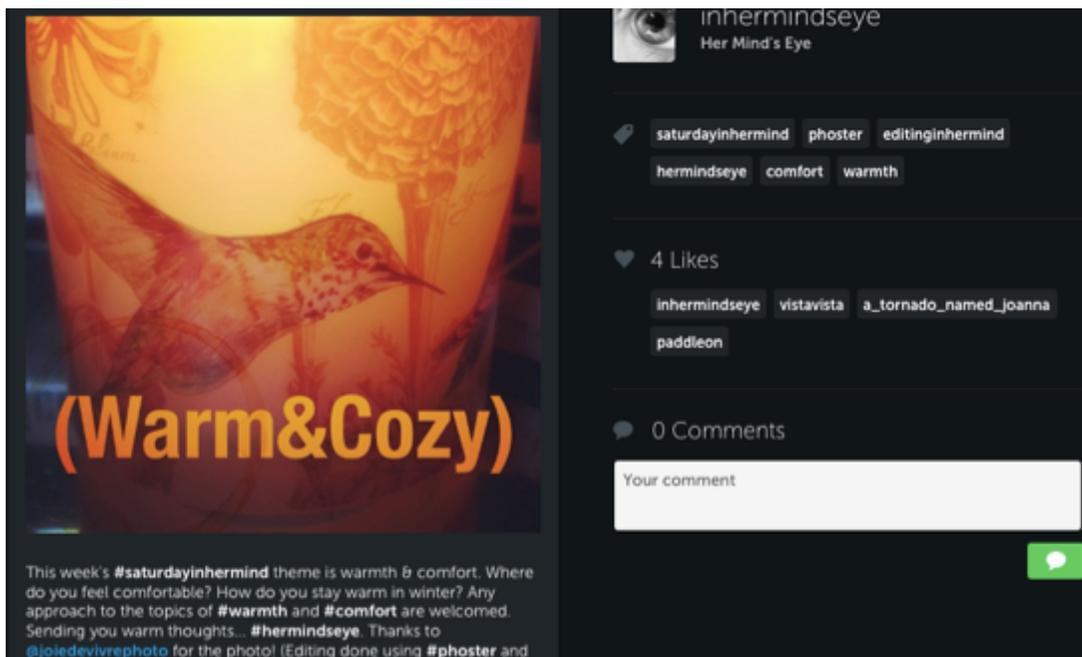
Things that are ugly can be things we want to avoid, like cement structures that may be unsafe and are not well designed for human enjoyment, or they can be quite the opposite – items that we cherish, that have comforted and protected us. While @hannah\_nutwood “accidentally” opened this topic with a funny picture of her wig-clad self (that she decided fit the theme well), she also incidentally touched on the theme of body image that I think was an appropriate consideration given the group’s prior and post-feedback to the topic of self representation. With a photograph of her hand, Joanna proclaimed that the bumps and scars are what make it beautiful. Jodi’s picture may or may not speak to physical beauty, being that it was found in the woman’s bathroom it suggests such a possibility. The fact that the bathroom was in a university *art department* leaves it open to other possible interpretations. Next is my image; I ask what makes a beautiful photo, and if pixelated/low quality images are ugly. I ask, what mobile photography images are left behind due to low quality, despite depicting a beautiful moment or scene.

The “ugly photo” theme speaks to places and objects in our vicinity. The ugly spaces that we encounter as part of our daily lives are infrequently presented in social media photographs, which instead tend to focus on beautiful, unique urban environments. Perhaps they are advertisements for perfect cities, and perfect lives, or do we take a step or two away from the unpleasant? Even the “ugly” photos presented here have a certain aesthetic quality to them, and many of us made a choice to highlight the beauty within the “ugly” spaces and objects in our lives and in ourselves. Like a much loved doll, a cherished scarf may look worn and nubby, rather than fashion-chic, but even in this image, it is presented in a loving light. Photos of messy selves, messy lives, and pictures that aren’t necessary aesthetically beautiful are not completely new to our group. @hannah\_nutwood’s jesting blonde bombshell photo, for example, was posted before the themes announcement! Perhaps in our group we are different than some social media

spaces, in that many of us are not afraid to “show it how it is.” Is this true for all group members? Where do we draw the line, and why? Is it important to us to see our environment as beautiful, and if so why? What falls through the cracks? How do we deal with things that are ugly, and cannot, or should not be made beautiful? Do they have a place on social media, and what does their inclusion or exclusion mean for us?

### ***Theme #14: Warm & Cozy***

This week's #SaturdayInHerMind theme is warmth & comfort. Where do you feel comfortable? How do you stay warm in winter? Any approach to the topics of #warmth and #comfort are welcomed. Sending you warm thoughts... #HerMindsEye. Thanks to Haley for the photo! (Editing done using #phoster and IG filters) #editinginhermind



*Figure 64. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no.14: Warm and Cozy*

On January 26<sup>th</sup> I sent out a message on Facebook to remind everyone that the theme "the ugly picture" was coming to an end, noting that some were still trying to catch up to the theme of collage. I asked: “do you have a theme suggestion for this week’s #SaturdayInHerMind creativity prompt?” My Facebook message also informed group participants of progress happening with the exhibition, for example, that Joanne and I would be visiting two spaces, and reminding participants to go through their photos and tag those which were exhibition candidates with #hmeexhibits. “Remember, you can change your mind later! This first step is a chance to begin thinking about it!” In this message I also asked group members how we can stay motivated to be creative throughout the winter, and how we could encourage each other. One idea was to create a daily challenge, like those that some participants were already engaged in throughout December.

For those who are interested, the #hmemphotoaday challenge was born. This message had fewer responses. While some showed interest in the new challenge, no one proposed a new weekly theme. At first I wrote a request for more feedback on Facebook message to everyone:

I hope I didn't overwhelm with too many messages. A little "help" or small feedback helps me to know you're out there and interested. Let's stay strong and committed to our community and creativity!

Finally, in order to keep the themes on schedule, I offered to come up with a new theme if no one else had provided one: "I was thinking of maybe "comfortable spaces" - places that are easy to access, comfortable physically and or emotionally... or it could be interpreted more broadly - as "warm." I thought of it earlier this week when I was not warm. \*lol\*" A while later, more replies rolled in that express their support for the new theme: "Great theme! I love it!" "AWESOME!" "Great theme! I'm slow in replying, but still about... will try for photo a day too... but these days a lot on the go" "Just catching up, I had a full day. Yes, I could do a photo for you."

Several also accepted the photo a day challenge! Later, in our focus group, many laughed at how quickly they dropped out of the daily challenge. In a Facebook chat thread, I saw that when I was feeling personally discouraged, and thinking that perhaps some group members were becoming less interested, it wasn't long before I received enthusiastic supportive responses. In this way, I felt that the women were in fact taking responsibility for the group's collective success, production, and energy. They were also looking after me as their leader/facilitator!

### Light & comfort in nature, home and a local café

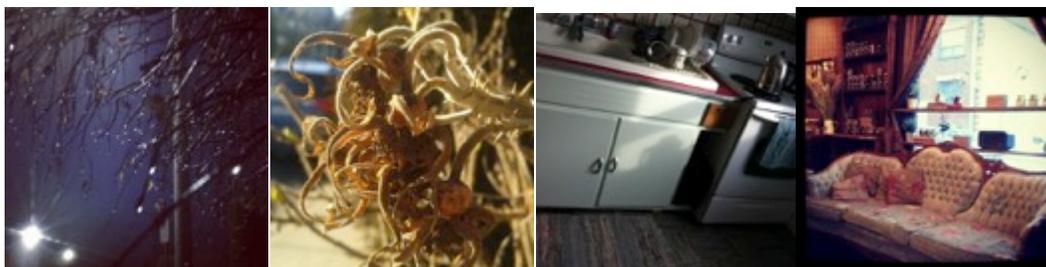


Figure 65. Light & comfort in nature, home and a local café

**@morningmango** Fog Berries.

**@morningmango** Rose Remnants. #stepsister

**@paddleon** That watery sun after snow, coffee after shovelling #hmemphoto2day Comments @morningmango Homey and cosy. @laurelmhart Watery sun... Lovely words!

**Haley** #montrealwinter #stayingwarm Comments: @solelidad Lovely ! What is that place ? Haley #fuschia epicerie fleurs : ) @solelidad thanks! Haley No problem! I think you would like it!

### Cozy in bed (with the occasional cat included)



Figure 66. Cozy in bed (with the occasional cat included)

**@marjobourge** Day 1/11 of my vacation! Feels so good to be reading calmly in my bed! #afterlight #hmemphoto2day #igersmontreal #vacation #ineedorest #alexandredumas #dumas #readingisthebestthingever & **@marjobourge (not pictured)** Day 2/11 on vacation! Today is the second and last day that I give myself permission to do nothing! I need rest! #afterlight #rhonnadesigns #vacation #warmth #stayinginbestisthebestthing *Comments: @morningmango Love the motto. And the do-nothing day. It's needed @marjobourge sometimes!*

**@laurelmhart** On the benefits of hiding places. cozy & warm #comfort #warm #home #introvert time #secret #nest

**@hannah\_nutwood** The ultimate cosy-ness for me is being under the covers at the end of the day with my cat purring by my feet.

**@joyjoyjodi** for last weeks theme, "warm & cozy" (sorry im so behind..) hugs from Xavier makes me feel all warm and fuzzy inside. it's a comfort to have him in my life

Where do women go to recharge, to find peace and comfort in the city? While some of us have access to our families and communities, for others, notions of what define community shift. I chose the theme warmth, because I desired this warmth in our group at this cold point in the winter, when we were further separated and posting less. When we interact through Instagram, the images we post form our collective mood and create the atmosphere of the mental/emotional *place*, or virtual/digital *space* where we meet. A room filled with warmth is a place where women want to come together to connect, share, and recover from the winter. One of my motivations in creating *Her Mind's Eye* was a desire to create a community of comfort and creativity.

Previously I had met with some participants one on one and we shared an interest in locating and sharing knowledge about warm, comforting, soul nurturing, and welcoming spaces and places within the city. I hoped to exchange place-based urban knowledge and develop our collective knowledge of how we find comfort within the two cities. I also saw the theme as an opportunity for us to collectively give ourselves and each other permission for our comforts, and shared needs, as I saw this need for permission for one's comforts as a theme occurring in the sum of the women's previous submissions. Several of the comforts which emerged included permission for enjoying and spending time photographing the natural environment, stopping to enjoy winter's light, going to the café spaces, reading, cozy furniture (notably several photos were taken in bed) and of course, cute, comforting, cuddling cats! This suggests that one's cat is

not simply just a pet or entertainment, but a support animal who plays an integral and important role as daily comforter.

### Theme #15: Guilt

*This week's #SaturdayInHerMind Special! Guilt! Buy one, get two free! Image and theme curtesy of @marjobourge "What makes us feel guilty and especially wrongly guilty as women and artists..." (An addition via @llangset, you can also incorporate forgiveness as another dimension of the guilt theme.)*



Figure 67. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no.15: Guilt

Following the prior week's slow response, in my Facebook message requesting a theme for the following week, I provided a few more questions to ignite possible theme ideas: "Has anyone been recently inspired by a theme or idea that could make a good #saturdayinhermind theme? Is there something you would like to learn about the other women in the group? Is there an idea you are struggling with, excited by or otherwise interested in that could add meaning to our photo-quest?" Marjolaine was the first to reply, about 40 minutes later:

Marjolaine: A theme to introspect and get to know each other could be GUILT... What makes us feel guilty and especially wrongly guilty as women and artists..."

Lisa: "How about guilt and forgiveness?"

Laurel: Deep! I love it - let's give it a shot. It works well with me, as today I was feeling guilty for not doing something I "have to do" in exchange for something artistic/cultural/personal that I also have to do. Marjolaine - any idea for the theme poster? Should I try to whip something together?

Marjolaine: I think I have an idea... Give me a few minutes... Do I go with guilt and forgiveness or just guilt?

Joanna: Guilt is a good one.

Marjolaine: Just sent the poster at the hme email address.

### Guilt. Time, food, shared understanding & permissions



Figure 68. Guilt. Time, food, shared understanding & permissions

**@laurelmhart** When there's so much to do, doing one thing leaves me feeling guilty for not doing something else. I found the word itself to be powerful, especially writing it over a blank paper. The question of what I was feeling guilty for helped make me aware of feeling responsible for aspects of the "women's domain," a shortage of time, and the need for occasional rest and life balance. I liked the shadow of the hand, as it symbolized my thoughts reaching for something without even being aware of it. #personalreflection #therapeuticphotography #thoughts & struggles

**@marjobourge** Guilt for me comes in many shapes : - Being on Instagram instead of creating - Reading instead of being outside - Eating sugary stuff once in a while... and so many others What I need to do is give myself place to all these things I like... Being on Instagram then creating, going out and read in a cafe, eat healthy and homemade then sometimes indulge in a little treat. I need to find balance! #selfportrait #igottoloveandacceptmyselfinallthatiam #homoquebecensis #guiltisabitch

**@morningmango** Guilty pleasures: alphabet pasta for dinner.

*Comments:* **@hannah\_nutwood** Where do you find it? My local grocery store doesn't seem to supply them any more and it is one of my simple pleasures. (I won't even call it a guilty pleasure because I'm loud and proud about my love of alphabet pasta -- and I'm glad I'm not the only one! **@morningmango** I found these at Choices in White Rock. Whole grain kamut bundles of mealtime fun. You're not alone here :)

### Creative explorations (without fixed results)



Figure 69. Creative explorations (without fixed results)

**@paddleon** for the train only, too much to do here - no time for a guilty read

**@hannah\_nutwood** My guilt is collecting beautiful paper and then having no idea what to do with it all. *Comments:* **@marjobourge** I know the feeling! :) **@laurelmhart** I too have this trouble, well more a time issue, and space. I dream of my own studio with hundred of drawers and built in storage

**@laurelmhart** Guilt is pretty nails #SaturdayInHerMind #HerMindsEye #time @vistavista Ouhh looking fancy

### Parties, (me) presents, and places



Figure 70. Parties, (me) presents, and places

@livenow The Beat Girrrl. #igloofest #igloofest2014 #hiphop #dj #light #montreal #music

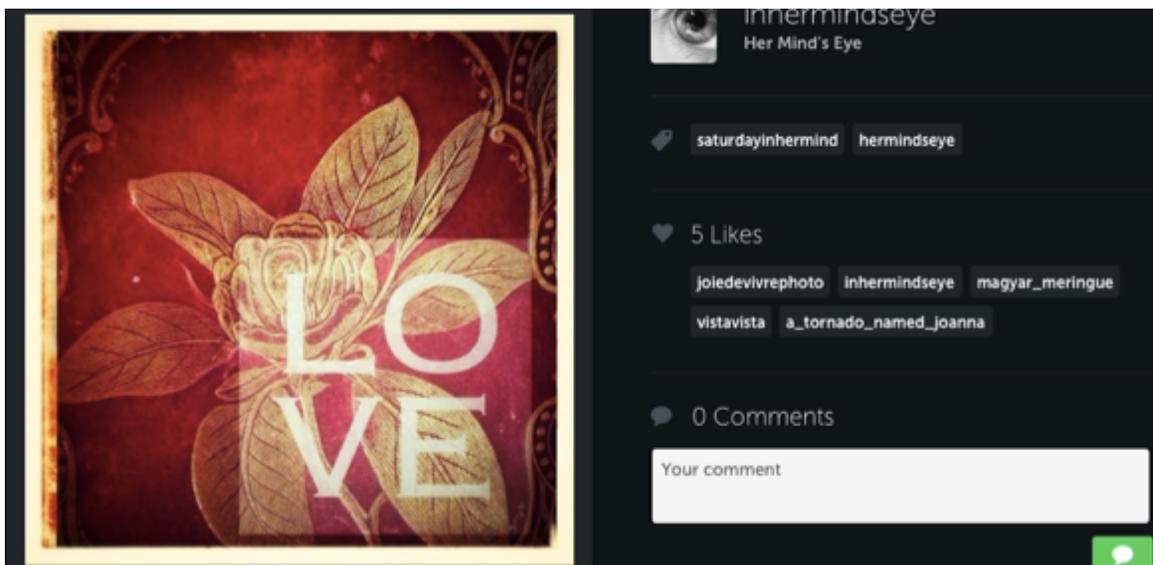
@joyjoyjodi my guilty pleasure... retro dresses I can't really afford to buy often... this is my 3rd one from #roisetherebel ( I bet everyone thought my guilty pleasure would be chocolate... it is I guess but I have it everyday so it's more of an addiction)

@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna My lovely BF is not on Instagram so I feel very safe posting this. I wont be home for Valentines Day so I've hid this in my pants draw and will call him on the 14th to tell him where to find it. *Comments: @a\_tornado\_named\_joanna Feeling a bit funny guilty about surprising him after we said no presents.*

Guilt: money, time, food, places and priorities. Art. Fun. Creativity. These are some of the themes that arose. When we feel guilty, what gets cut from our lives? What is allowed and not allowed – by society? As women? What about how we strive to fit our internal expectations? Should a woman feel guilty for spending her money on fashion, or not preparing a healthy meal? Does she internalize social pressures for how she should spend her time? What is the value in our sharing and comparing these recognitions of our impulses of guilt? How do we decide what is a valuable use of our time?

### ***Theme #16: Love (& Friendship)***

Valentines is celebrated in different ways all over the world. In some places, it is a time to celebrate Friendship and Love - this week's #SaturdayInHerMind theme!



*Figure 71. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no.16: Love (& Friendship)*

While the two preceding themes came about on Facebook, I cannot recall or locate the origin of the theme of love (and friendship). The photo itself is taken and edited by me. Sometimes, themes were sent to me in a private message on Instagram, or during an in-person meet-up, so it is possible that either of these two were the case, or that I came up with the theme. Choosing “love” near Valentine’s Day was in keeping with previous themes, where the holidays were drawn upon to inspire greater interest and focus in contemplating a holiday-related idea. I have

come to see the holidays as an opportunity for strengthening community, because although we are apart and experiencing our environments and lives differently, during the holidays, everywhere we go the city reminds us of a shared idea. Harnessing and building on this idea can bring our thoughts closer together, which can lead to interesting developments. By including friendship and a broader context, the “Valentine’s Day,” holiday standards were shifted from the ordinary holiday ideas, although stereotypes and social standards remained.



Figure 72. Love and friendship.

**@solelidad (pigeon emoji +snowflake emoji)** #nofilter #walkingthecity #plateaumontroyal #plateau #montreal #mtlmoments #livemontreal #capturemtl #igersmtl #igersmontreal *Comment: #SaturdayInHerMind Those birds ! That snow !*

**@joyjoyjodi** this is all I got that's not a cat picture for love & friendship... a dark chocolate cupcake for Galentine's.

**@elodielilysamuella** Happy belated galentine's day #outofnailpolish

**@sarasramblings** Love is.

**@laurelhart** Love & Friendship

Despite the small number of submissions, there was a range of responses to the theme of love. They showed a love for a moment captured within the city scape, the single valentines and the “galentines” – enjoying valentines with one’s female friends rather than a date, followed by two images which depict budding romantic love and partnership.

It’s worth noting that for the final themes before the exhibition, the number of submissions began to drop. Participants had already begun working hard trying to select, and organize images, as well as write artist statements for their exhibitions. Meet-ups were happening regularly with different group members. Sometimes it would be myself and one other, and other times group members would meet together at the site or to review or prepare some element of the exhibition. The focus of our activities was on determining which images they wanted to exhibit, creating an artist statement, titling, and designing the layout and overall presentation. Similarly, some group members became very savvy at checking their photo feeds. For those who didn’t have large numbers of other people whom they followed on Instagram, or group members only, it was much easier to check their “feed” to see all the most recent images.

This led to the problem of a reduction in tagging of images both with the #hermindseye tag and the #saturdayinhermind tag. For this portion of the study, I've chosen to only include the images tagged. It complicates matters when group members do not tag, as it is difficult to determine if they are not intending the image for the group, or if they are simply sharing images intended as personal and not for the group through their Instagram account. Tagged or not, most group members continue to post on Instagram and comment on, and share their images together. In fact, our feedback and personal interactions spilled over onto Facebook as we became friends. For example, several group members selected photos which they hadn't tagged with #hermindseye for the exhibition. When asked, many told me that they just forgot. It seems that the priority was in reaching and connecting with others (both within *Her Mind's Eye* and without), which many were able to do simply through their photo feed; they were not necessarily ensuring that all of our photographs be localized under the single hashtag of #hermindseye. I reminded everyone of the importance of tagging, so that all can see contributions and can keep track of posts, as a collective.

### ***Theme #17: Snow: A Love/Hate Relationship***

*Yeah, snow and I go way back. When I was young, I rarely saw snow and my heart would light up on the days it would show up. Some days, it's hard to go outside, because I run into snow everywhere. So often, s/he's a mess, slushing through the sidewalks, and trying to cause an avalanche on my front steps But I confess, s/he does look good on film! Comments: @laurelmhart to [Vancouver group members] you May way to take a Vancouver spin on it and do "rain: a love/hate relationship" @morningmango I just saw this tag. Luckily got some snow this weekend, prompting some tardy pictures.*

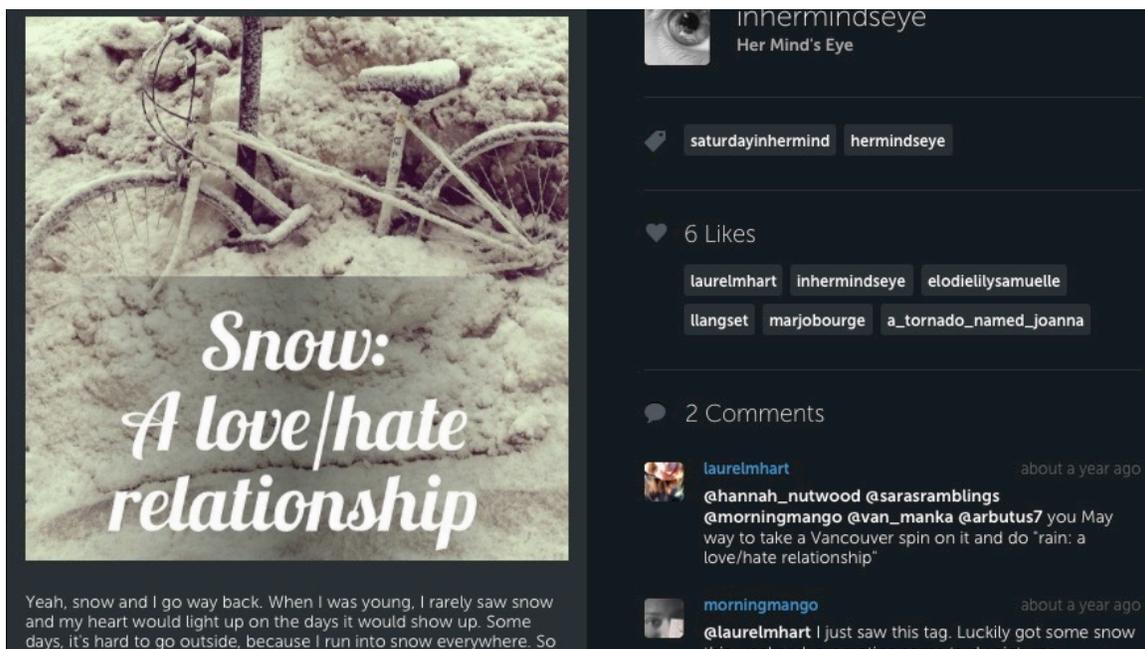


Figure 73. Weekly #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no.17: Snow: A Love/hate relationship

The poster image for this week's theme was created by me, however the theme itself was collaboratively developed by Hind and Jodi through a Facebook chat message, after I had sent out a call for a new weekly theme:

**FB message/chat, February 16, 2014.**

Laurel - How has your week been? It took me some time to post an image for this week's #saturdayinhermind theme of Friendship & love. Have you seen anything this week? Do you have an idea for a new theme for the upcoming week?

Hind - Winter? Parcs in the winter? Snow? Did we do that already?

Jodi - Is 'signs of spring' too early for a theme?

Hind - I thought about that, but seeing the forecast for the coming days I don't think it'll be easy.

Jodi - I was afraid of that:( Winter needs to end ASAP. How about 'go away winter' for a theme

Hind - Hahah true! Although I think parks/outdoor skating rinks look good in the winter!

Jodi - To each it's own;P haha

Hind - Haha yeah

Jodi - I tend to avoid snow after December... It lost its novelty

Hind - Hahahah very true!

Jodi - 'love/hate relationship with snow' could work;P

Hind - Sounds like a great idea!

Laurel - done! Thanks Hind & Jodi!

During our winter meetings, many Montrealers expressed their struggle with getting out during the cold weather and explained that they took fewer photos as a result. I hoped that Jodi and Hind's tag might help Montreal people to find the bravery to snap a few photos outside in the cold, and try to apply creative eyes to the snow they see around them, that they trudge through every day. Furthermore, there was once more a similarity in weather between the two cities, which I had hoped would make the locational aspect of the theme work out all right. Vancouver had just had a (rare) snowfall, and Montreal, well Montreal is a frozen snow covered land for many months of the year. As you will find, my latter intention didn't go according to plan.

**Montreal's snow (beauty/awe & disgust)**



*Figure 74. Montreal's snow (beauty/awe & disgust)*

@laurelmhart For the love of #snow #SaturdayInHerMind #igersmontreal #winter #mtlwinter #HerMindsEye #hmemphotoaday #canada #montreal #urbancanada #igerscanada #lifeincanada #mileend #mileendmtl

@llangset Snowscapes 2 Comments: @llangset #nuitblanche #nuitblanchewater

@joyjoyjodi the snow was melting and now it's ice because it suddenly got cold again. winter it's time to go!!

@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna Yeah..... I'm sick of winter. Comments: @laurelmhart :) is it your bike?

@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna found art :)

### Vancouver's snow (absence, longing)



Figure 75. Vancouver's snow (absence, longing)

**@morningmango** Snow, at last. *Comments: @laurelmhart – I'm in need of a new theme this week, any ideas? @morningmango – laurelhart how about 'insider/outsider'? Consideration of when and where we feel we belong...or feel excluded?*

**@hannah\_nutwood** The extent of our snow woes in Vancouver this morning. Some accumulation overnight and then wet snow in the morning turning everything to slush and nothingness

Once more, given the small numbers of submissions I didn't group them in to sub-categories. While the snow images show aesthetic play and framing, they also show regional specification, and our very different physical geographic experiences. By focusing on our experience of the weather, the images and accompanying responses show different perceptions and narratives of place. Just as the snow theme was announced, Vancouver's brief snow had begun to melt. I had made a note on the theme directed at the Vancouver members, suggesting that they "take a Vancouver spin on it and do 'Rain: A love/hate relationship.'" Despite this, the Vancouver members who submitted all focused on snow. The geographic group mis-match was apparent in the photos of @morningmango and @hannah\_nutwood. @morningmango suggested for a future theme: 'insider/outsider' "Consideration of when and where we feel we belong... or feel excluded?" At the same time, exhibition preparation for the Montreal show was well underway. I was worried that the Vancouver group was really feeling the focus was on Montreal, and without a leader in Vancouver who had the time and desire to take up the reigns to plan a sister show there, I felt there wasn't much that I could do. I was happy to discover that many of the Vancouver participants did participate in the Montreal exhibition fully, and in a Facebook discussion, some expressed a desire for an exhibition (or the same exhibition) to be held in Vancouver in the future. I believe also that I may have been less present online, as I became busily involved and rushing about the city with the exhibition.

As many Facebook messages and emails were exchanged between Montreal group members planning for the exhibition, I struggled to try not to have the Vancouver group members get pulled into these message threads. Although Vancouver members expressed their great appreciation for being a part of the group, all (with one exception) did not continue to participate

once the official “phase 1” of the research study was complete. I believe the primary reason for this was a lack of meet-ups, connected to a central leader/facilitator, and the small group size, which placed higher demands and responsibility on members for in-person meetings. Concerning the themes, although I felt that the Saturday In Her Mind themes helped to unite us as a group, by this point, it seemed they became more of a nuisance. An excerpt from our March 22, 2014 focus group illustrates the women’s response to the theme. It is worth keeping in mind that this focus group took place a few weeks after the exhibition was opened, and the preparations and hanging had just recently been completed. The transcript has been edited down a bit, and some members’ confirming comments (i.e. agreeing: “Yeah, Yeah”) having been removed for the sake of brevity.

Lisa – I think the variety of places and mediums to meet and kind of exchange ideas was very good, so one could do it on their own time and... You know, do Facebook in the middle of the night, or even meet in person, if you have the time!

Haley – it was flexible; very regular, regular opportunities to be involved

Jodi – It wasn’t too demanding. Haley – yep

Jodi – except when you kind of miss the deadline for this Saturday... *Everyone Laughs*

Sarah – I felt a little guilty when I missed the deadline.

Jodi – Awh.. I’m posting on a Tuesday now, I’ve got to post two Saturdays in a row..

Laurel – That’s interesting, not to start a new topic now, but do you think that’s why the Saturday themes became less popular?

Several group members – Yeah Jodi – probably

Laurel – I just started it again today

Someone – Yes, I thought that [mumbles]

Laurel – I thought it’s good to, well maybe it’s good to not get too hung up on the Saturday deadline part of it.

Haley – yeah

Laurel – but I thought it was good because it kept us, like it had a reason to check back  
Several group members – yeaah – Someone – oh, who posted what? oh yeah, who’s late?

*The group laughs hard*

It seems that perhaps having weekly themes was too intensive after awhile, and bi-weekly themes might have worked better, as well as intentionally taking a break when other activities come to the forefront, and the season “shifts” its focus. Since much exhibition and prior artistic production happened around winter and spring in Montreal, perhaps a “winter break” would be ideal. I am also interested in expanding or improving upon the means of posting bi-weekly themes. In the final focus groups, participants suggested taking more responsibility for meet-ups, and creating schedules in advance, determining each member’s monthly responsibility for organizing of a group meeting. This idea could potentially also apply to the bi-weekly themes, thus allowing each person more time to determine a theme, be responsible for creating their own poster (alone or with assistance), and enable more consideration of the themes developed, as well as the responses. The fact that each member developed a theme seemed a crucial part of everyone’s willingness to participate and explore each theme.

At this time in our-meeting as a group, participants expressed that they didn't want to continue the weekly themes. One reason mentioned by Montreal participants are the ceaseless winters, during which they often take fewer photos, then later pick up more speed once the snow melts and the weather becomes comfortable enough to walk at length around the city. You can vey much see this winter weather interference in one of the final themes chosen for #SaturdayInHerMind, that of loving or hating snow. One of the women mentioned that she was tired of taking photos of her interior space. I can definitely say at this time that all energies were directed towards the exhibition that was to take place at the end of March. The final official "snow" theme took place February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

***Theme #18: Water around me***

*Hello #HerMindsEye community! #SaturdayInHerMind is back - and in honor of presenting #nuitblanchewater at the Indigenous Women's Symposium on Water this weekend, I decided to start up with this week's theme - #water ! Visit [www. Participatory creation .com](http://www.Participatorycreation.com) (no spaces) to learn more about this Nuit Blanche project that is ongoing. You still have the chance to contribute photos of your experiences and views of water that will hopefully later be featured on the website or in video complications! To those who are new to the group - welcome! This week we are wrapping up phase 1, and so if you are joining us now it is the perfect time! Remember that this weekend is your last chance to see the first ever #HerMindsEye exhibition at 1317 Mont Royal Avenue (not far from the metro). For those of you participating in the wrap up/reflection of "phase one" - see you tonight! Comment: @llangset Will look for some. It keeps coming down as snow. ;)*

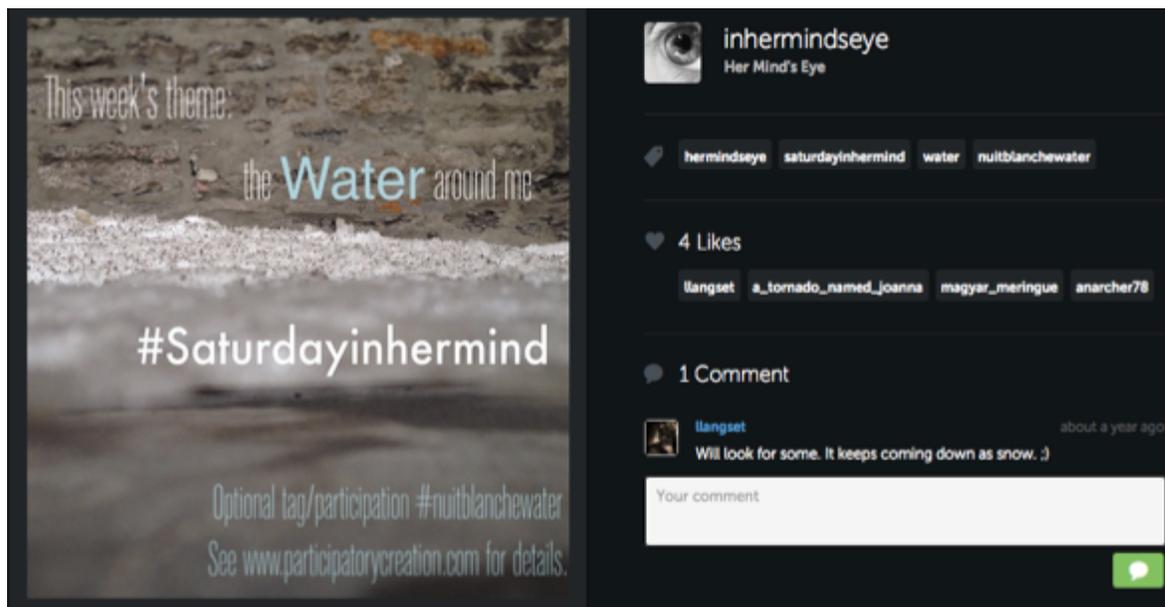


Figure 76. Weekly, #SaturdayInHerMind. Theme no.17: Water around me

### Montreal's spring melt and Vancouver's sparkling ocean

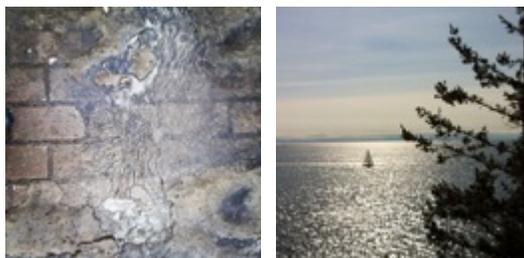


Figure 77. Montreal's spring melt and Vancouver's sparkling ocean

**@laurelmhart** and then the melt comes. With it, so much is revealed. The what once piled high begins to rush away, carving new paths. When the stasis is no longer possible, nature's tendency is to carve new paths, until a new stasis is reached. #instaprose *Comments: @[otheruser] meric, I especially appreciate it because when I write on my mobile in Instagram I always find errors after I post, but since i can't edit, I just leave them... Encouragement appreciated!*

**@magyar\_meringue** Happiness. #100daysofhappy #manka100 #hermindseye #saturdayinhermind

### Selected photos posted with #nuitblanchewater



Figure 78. Selected photos posted with #nuitblanchewater

**@llangset** Why I like the rain

**@llangset** Dream clouds 4

**@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna** And the rain fell on the sleepy city of #Montreal #walkinginhermind #hermindseye #HMEwater #hermindseyeExhibits #nuitblanchewater

**@a\_tornado\_named\_joanna** Melt ya bastard *Comments: @llangset Not yet.*

**@llangset** Uncertainty, what lies beneath.

I took one more shot at the weekly themes, a little while after the last one. My purpose was to see if perhaps group members needed a break, and would be re-inspired with a new motivation. While there was only one response (in addition to mine) to the water theme that included the #SaturdayInHerMind tag, several others actively inquired about, and participated in the Nuit Blanche event in Montreal, together with the planning meetings. Two women submitted numerous (a total of 15) photos for the exhibit by tagging their prior images and perhaps creating a new one or two. I've included a selection of the photos from the #nuitblanchewater tag above. Of course, by this time, the exhibition preparations were in full gear, and our first *Her Mind's Eye* exhibition was quite literally "around the corner." I should add here that several group members jumped at the chance to participate in the secondary Nuit Blanche exhibition, and to

attend the meeting held by myself and a colleague for planning the event. Numerous photos were tagged by group members with the #nuitblanchewater tag, but not the #saturdayinhermind tag. There was definitely interest in diversifying artistic involvement, and each person had only so much time to give. This came up in our Facebook Conversation, on January 10, 2014:

Laurel [...] also, I am working on a nuit blanche exhibition but I don't have full information to go ahead. Her Minds Eye could possibly contribute through photographs and even stories of experiences of water - presently in the city, history, memories, future thoughts... It's a side thing but it may be fun to have something "quick" happening as part of nuit blanche!

*(after my posts about HME exhibition )*

Sarah Love the water theme for Nuits Blanches!

Marie Soleil Very interesting project for Nuit Blanche ! I would be in, but need more info

Laurel It's a performance work in a nearby cafe that will hopefully involve some actors, maybe story collecting from the public I was thinking we can find a way to incorporate photos also there will be projection so I thought projecting photographs of water through the city or possibly with stories could be an option for anyone who is interested. Also - We should schedule the next Vancouver and Montreal meet-ups! Should I make another Google doodle to schedule? Which day of the week in general is best for everyone?

Although the lack of response to the final Saturday In Her Mind Themes might seem discouraging, I don't believe it is due to the surrounding context which demonstrates the highly active involvement: in-person collaborations, Facebook chats and wall posts, physical meet-ups, and photographic/artistic communications happening, predominantly with members of the Montreal group (although some Vancouver members continued participating virtually.) The women's interest and involvement with my "side project" demonstrated to me the importance of live, in-person engagement with community through the arts. The arts are a means of accessing the city, the community, and to connect with others in creative, inspiring, knowledge/thought-expanding and enriching ways. Community art is a place to connect, explore community and place, and together, to decide on what is important about our experience of life through our action, participation, and production.

### **Final reflection on #SaturdayInHerMind themes**

As the women in *Her Mind's Eye* were inspired, enriched and learned from one another as well as from my facilitation, so too was I inspired and developed more into my own role as an artist and community art leader. The #SaturdayInHerMind theme created a reliable space where we were regularly invite to engage with living creation alongside others. My responsibility to them to create an engaging community challenged me to adjust my teaching, to continuously engage and challenge my own photographic and artistic practices, and to adjust my ways of seeing and doing, as is always a requirement of collaborative creation and organization. Furthermore, when

life presented me with challenges, as a young academic woman in a multi-cultural, globalizing city (predominantly, my choosing to leave Montreal suddenly due to the needs of my family), *Her Mind's Eye* continued to support me, and together we continued to create and inspire each other via distance. In fact, in this time there were two additional exhibitions, one of which saw sister mail art exhibitions taking place in both Montreal and Tokyo. Also, following up on our final focus group, where members encouraged me to pass the reigns now that they knew how it is done, these exhibitions were organized with minimal help from me; each was created and facilitated by a different woman who took the role of exhibition leader, working together with others collaboratively. The photographs from #SaturdayInHerMind and others are explored further through my voice as a researcher in the *Discussions* section, chapter. 13.

## CHAPTER 11. #HMEExhibits: Exhibiting in the city

This chapter presents the process leading up to the creation of *Her Mind's Eye's* first ever physical, urban exhibition. This exhibition took place at the finale of our first six months, (i.e., the formal research portion of *Her Mind's Eye*.) It took place in the newly established gallery space of the Librarie Bonheur D'Occasion, on the centrally accessible, visible, culturally rich, and popular street of Avenue du Mont-Royal in Montreal, Quebec. Exhibition preparations took place from late January up until the installation at the end of March. It came to be a major component of our individual and collective productions, and influenced the meetings/activities of the group. Taking approximately three out of the six months to prepare and exhibit, this first exhibition spanned approximately half the duration of this study and was very important to the women, as it served as a pinnacle for our group's collaboration, women's leadership and co-organizing, and for the creation and presentation of the women's social media photographic works produced within the study. For this reason, the exhibition catalogue, which shares the women's self-selected photographs and artist statements is presented within chapter 12 that follows.

This section builds upon the first segment of the *Description*, called *Making It!*, and also continues from *#SaturdayInHerMind*, in describing from my position as facilitator, the communications, actions, events, group member contributions, community atmosphere, and leadership/facilitation techniques that went into the development of our first group exhibition. Chronologically, the creation of the exhibition follows closely where *#SaturdayInHerMind* concludes, although there is some small overlap in the final weeks of *#SaturdayInHerMind*, which helps to explain somewhat why there was a decrease in weekly themes. This chapter opens with a look at where the exhibition originated from and how it began to take form, followed by a description of how, beginning with online discussions, we, came to locate physical spaces in the city, followed by how the exhibition was prepared both in person and through social media guidance and collaborative leadership/organization, and touching on issues such as how we financed the space, how photographs were printed and exhibited, and how we negotiated identity and language differences and needs through this exhibition. The takeaway point from this chapter is the recognition that these online/offline community production practices made it possible for our group, comprised of women from different backgrounds, levels of art exhibiting experience, diverse disciplines, and those whom hadn't exhibited their work for many years (despite previous training), to create a dynamic, visible, and professional exhibition of our visions of urban environment.

### ***The first inklings of an exhibition***

The first mention of the idea of an exhibition was within the groups' consent form and recruitment notices. For some, this opportunity to be a part of an exhibition of a women's SMP collective, or even

just the possibility of publicly exhibiting their photography, was one of the primary reasons for joining *Her Mind's Eye*. In late November, I first revisited the idea of us planning for the exhibition. In a Facebook message to group members, I asked about what sorts of themes we might want, whether the exhibition should connect with our weekly themes, if it would be on a collaboratively selected theme, and how we might want to show the complexities that had arisen in our various thematic approaches. While this was mentioned before the prior year's end, the holiday season brought with it a delay in productivity, and as a result, December was mostly quiet. The moment January turned the corner, the exhibition woke up, and was quickly running at a full gallop.

In creating the exhibition, our focus shifted from our online co-creative production and in-person gatherings (previously focused on collective digital creation, exploration, sharing of local and social media photography knowledge, and socializing) into online organization and both group and one-on-one meetings around physical print production and the event, materials organization, and other aspects involved in the creation of an on-the-ground urban exhibition, which also involved numerous exhibition related meetings. Everyone, including the Vancouver members, and the sole Toronto member, were encouraged to submit their work and ultimately everyone took part. I offered to print and hang their work for them, adding: "It's a lovely chance to have your images, writing, and thoughts displayed in an urban center and a beautiful antique bookstore/art gallery location."

### ***Finding the exhibition space***

Within our regular meet-ups and in Facebook messages, all the members of *Her Mind's Eye* were encouraged to keep their eyes open in their walks around the city, and to scout for locations for our exhibition, both in Vancouver and Montreal. Such spaces could include inexpensive or free spaces, such as coffee shops that regularly exhibited artworks; more formal exhibition spaces, like local galleries; or other informal spaces (such as community sites like centers and libraries.) I asked: "If you see one, could you gather some info and (if you're brave) ask if they might be open to exhibiting work or if there is contact info?" Drawing upon a recent #saturdayinhermind theme for encouragement, I added: "New year, new projects!"

On January 10, 2014, Marie Soleil posted on Facebook that she had come across an appealing space on Avenue du Mont Royal, a popular street that is filled with shops with beautiful storefronts, where many go to stroll, shop, and enjoy cafés and bars spaced intermittently with the numerous unique, independently run stores. In addition to providing the store address, the owner's name and email address, and an invitation from the owner to contact him if we want details about how the space works, Marie Soleil uploaded a few images of the space to our Facebook group. Later, I went with Joanna to visit the site. Just as Marie Soleil had, we instantly fell in love with the site for its ideal street front location, big

professional exhibition space (well lit with tall white walls), combined with its “everyday” approachability as a bookstore with an art gallery. Also, because it was a functioning store, there would always be staff on hand minding the exhibition. At the time, there was no wait list because the owners had only just opened the gallery space, and they were still in the final stages of the process of completing their contracts for renting, establishing their procedures for exhibitions, etcetera. Originally they had asked for \$1000 for two weeks, however Joanna and I asked them to reconsider, as we were a community group of women and some were students. We added that our exhibition had many artists and would provide great visibility for their space, due to our collective wide reach and advertisement through social media. They agreed to cut the cost significantly. I was nervous about isolating any group members or highlighting the personal economic situations of any of the women in the group. Also, in addition to the exhibition being the women’s photography show – a collaborative production of our community – it also overlapped with my research, so I felt it was important that the fee be optional.

After discussing with one or two group members on Facebook, I proposed this: “What I am thinking of doing is paying the fee up front and asking those who are willing or able to contribute, to please do so (perhaps on a sliding scale?). I don't want the cost to intimidate anyone from exhibiting, as this will be a lovely tribute to our program.” Rapidly, through Facebook, about two thirds of group members agreed that a fee of \$50 each was acceptable, and expressed their desire to exhibit in this site. A few others contacted me in person or in private messages, giving their confirmation of the space. With that, we secured the site in mid-January for a March 2013 exhibition.

Some were more able to offer their time, while others had greater financial flexibility. Many contributed to the cost, while others who had greater financial limitations also offered to help more with the work of creating the exhibition, which was invaluable. The final result was that every one of the group members had her photos presented beautifully in the exhibition. I took upon the costs of the frames, printing and other material costs, as well as approximately one third of the rental cost for the exhibition space. A few others bought/brought some additional supplies for hanging the photos, and group members helped hugely in picking up the photo frames, storing them nearby the exhibition, and exchanging those that had cracks. Overall, I considered the financial costs I incurred to be somewhat high (as a graduate student), which holds implications for sustainability and future exhibitions. Creating financial leeway was significant, as it enabled flexibility overall, and helped us to maintain group peace and balance. Financial backing helped to overcome initial cost hurdles and made the exhibition more feasible, particularly due to our time constraints. Many local cafés had wait lists of about half a year for artists’ free (also unpaid) exhibitions. Not long after this exhibition, many group members (including myself) experienced big changes, and a half-year delay would likely have resulted in a very different sort of exhibition.

### ***Stage one: Preparing for the exhibition***

The first steps towards preparing for the exhibition began in January, before our space was secured. At this time, I encouraged all of the women to go review their photos in their individual Instagram accounts, and to begin considering which images were valuable or meaningful to them. I suggested that they tag the photos they found interesting or attention grabbing with the hashtag: #hermindseyeexhibits. I encouraged them to deeply reflect on their photos, looking for any theme that might have emerged since the start of the group, and when looking through their photos, to ask themselves, “What jumped out at me? What did I focus on a lot? What is my experience of urban life in the city? Why are certain things important to me?” I acknowledged that photos may only tell part of the story and miss other parts (as had come up recently in the Vancouver group meeting), and recommended that they choose how to tell the story through what photos they selected, and how they chose to describe them, but to begin with, to just tag the images that grabbed their attention the most.

Around mid to late January a few of the women whom had begun tagging photos of interest told me that they were still having trouble knowing which images to select for the exhibition, and later, how to write an artist statement. In response to this first issue, I created two posts with guidance in creating a series or selecting a grouping of photos for an exhibition. We also had group meetings where we talked about these issues, and walked through individual ideas with those who joined the meeting. Here the issue of how to edit images for the exhibition came up. Were the photos on Instagram good enough? Several apps, like Snapseed and Squareready, were shared for editing larger images outside of Instagram, and for making borders. Those who were comfortable with Photoshop could edit pictures on their computer and mail them to me, though I think only one used this option.

The smartphone photo editing applications had been introduced before, though with the exhibition, Instagram’s lower print quality due to smaller sizes and low resolution now held greater meaning, leading to more interest in alternative editing tools. Explaining Instagram file sizes and print resolution/size limitations was a bit tricky online, but it worked out eventually. Members were asked to send me the highest resolution images that they could, and were recommended to email images edited either outside of Instagram, (particularly if they were wanting to print a few large photos), or, to send me their Instagram edited images which Instagram auto-saves saved to their photography file library (on iPhones, this is called the camera roll.) These uncompressed images are often higher resolution than those which Instagram stores online. Those who were busy and unable to prepare high quality images, selected four from Instagram to be printed at a smaller resolution in a single frame. I had to do a lot of emailing and Facebook messaging in order to resolve some of these resolution issues during printing.

To help everyone to begin envisioning what the exhibition, or their series might look like, I created a mock-up in Photoshop of several imagined photographic displays (discussed later in the printing/framing/hanging section), and posted it in our Facebook group. What follows is a description of the very open guideline (or digital handout) that I wrote to help the participants design their series for the exhibition.

***The wide-open, overly detailed guide to creating a series/content for the exhibition***

This guideline was created in response to some of the women expressing (in private messages and during the in-person meeting) the difficulty they were having in selecting images for the exhibition. During one meeting, I verbally explained some options for creating a series, and when I offered to post a guideline online, many responded enthusiastically. I then created a detailed but very flexible, guideline presenting multiple approaches that I posted on the group page in the evening after our meet-up. I then sent a chat message to everyone to view the post on the Facebook group wall:

*Check out the Facebook post that has tons of ideas to inspire you in selecting your photos for the exhibit. [...] P.S. - this goes out to everyone - Montreal, Vancouver, present today or across an ocean. Let's bring together a lovely exhibit (or a few!)*

The post opened with the subject, “*self-curating for the show!*” and recommended selecting approximately four to six images. It also encouraged participants to write a little bit about what they were thinking when tagging their images on Instagram with #hermindseyeexhibits, in order to help us individually and collectively develop and share our exhibition ideas and thoughts about the urban environment.

Some of the guidelines for “self-curating” included choosing a theme (several broad examples were provided, along with the option to draw on one of our weekly themes); choosing images based on their aesthetic qualities; selecting photos that talked about an issue (such as an urban issue); or creating a series, and how an overall series can be unified. A few additional ideas included a photo essay, pairing writing with photos; creating an exhibition goal (such as showing your life, or selling images); being imaginative (for example by implementing mixed media or having an alternative installation style), and/or having a strong urban focus to examine features of the city and their implications.

Following these varied and loose guidelines, I provided some light-hearted encouragement: “*So look through your photos! Find something that interests you. Tag it. Change your mind... Get inspired and go create a special selection of photos or video or prints or books or stories - it's up to you!*” The post finally closed with two example images of theme-based series that came from my prior existing mobile photography practice, and the pilot project (discussed briefly in the prelude section), in which I

combined inductive qualitative coding with the tagging (or coding) process present in Instagram, and the arts-based technique of exhibition and exhibition statement (Hart, 2012).

As the guide is rather long, I was initially worried whether it would work for the group members or if it was too much information. The reason for the length was that I did not want to give an assigned or prescribed mode of exploring and representing their work. I hoped that in reading it over, they might connect with one of the ideas and let the rest go. Everyone saw the post and there was positive feedback from six group members on the Facebook post. Although six may not seem like a lot, it is usually only a few individuals who actively like or comment on a post on social media; therefore six might be suggestive of the overall group sentiment, also the feedback to the guide was very good. Joanna replied, “Well planned out! This will be a wonderful project and today was very motivational.” I believe that it did in fact serve its intended purpose as a “spring board” for exhibition planning.

In a later FB chat message on January 27<sup>th</sup>, I posted a short recap to remind everyone once again that they needed to consider and begin selection of their images for the exhibition. I believe that simply through an ongoing review of one’s images, while thinking, remembering, and pondering the concept of exhibiting and creating a collection of images, it is quite likely that a series will eventually emerge, as images and ideas rise to the surface of the mind. By remembering, reviewing, and thinking about it, one begins to know what they will do. Ideas solidify; things begin to look right, and as I told them, “Remember, you can change your mind later. This first step is a chance to begin thinking about it!”

### ***Stage two: Artist statements, confirming participation, and layout***

By mid-February, many of the participants hadn’t yet submitted their photos and the first version of their artist statements. A Facebook message that I sent out on February 17<sup>th</sup> asked everyone to send me their draft artists’ statements. I wanted to know how many were planning to participate, so I could confirm the dimensions for each person’s exhibition space, and design their layouts accordingly. I also began to discuss details about the photographs such as asking about the sizes, as some participants had begun emailing me their photos for the upcoming printing. In a meeting, we had decided to limit the photographs to pre-determined sizes of small, medium and large for organizational/printing logistics and continuity. An alternative option was: “If you don't have time, just email me 3 photos at [inhermindsey@gmail.com](mailto:inhermindsey@gmail.com) and I'll print & exhibit them for you!” In our focus group, one individual mentioned that having one day’s notice to submit these materials wasn’t enough.

Following a reminder email, nine confirmations appeared from both Montreal and Vancouver members, within our Facebook chat, such as “confirmed!” “I have sent in all my things” and information regarding their intention to upload, or in-process struggles with email accounts, for example. More arrived through email and private messages on Facebook, including those with questions about the

exhibition, and for a few, concerns about not having enough time to assemble their photos together. In a few cases (about three) I assisted participants in creating a single image containing four photos of their choosing. In the end, every member of the group, from Vancouver and Montreal, and even our rogue member in Toronto, ended up exhibiting.

### *Artist statements*

Generally speaking, group members did not reply as much when I would post something in a teacherly manner, as opposed to the casual and fun voice of social media group facilitator. However, this was not the case with the exhibition planning. I definitely found that sometimes being strong, clear, and demanding (though friendly), was the only way to get the responses that were necessary. There was, however, a balance that had to be struck. Preparing for the exhibition, and the anticipation that surrounded our co-creation of this real, “live” event allowed for some of that give.

The women of *Her Mind's Eye* also saw what was required, and many offered to help lift some of the load from my shoulders, both to help me, and to improve the overall quality of the show, as they could see that I was a bit overstretched with obligations and overwhelmed with providing detailed individual responses. Some were also interested in learning about physical exhibition preparation processes first hand, such as printing, framing and hanging the photographs. The guidance I provided, which up until now had been extremely loose, and in some cases (such as the failed blog), largely unaccessed, now became exhibition focused, frequent, often applied, and frequently took place within Facebook chat, as the looming deadline and our need to complete preparations pressed on us. Those who needed it utilized my added resources, and my offers to help, such as in this Facebook post:

*Gotta say, I'm totally loving the late artist statement drafts that are rolling in... Do you have one for me? Send! Send! Also if you need help, send me a message. I can either provide you with resources or tips for writing, or we can talk about it (maybe a phone call?) so it will be easier to write.*

The women also pointed out and took responsibility for issues of importance that had yet to be raised, such as planning the vernissage. For preparing artist statements, I sent a link to a website, and similarly provided a general outline of an artist bio. I reminded everyone once again that the exhibition was about their self-selecting of images and their own message:

I encourage you to begin looking at your photos and asking yourself if you see any themes, as well as asking yourself what your purpose is in taking pictures, and in the group. It can be complex and philosophical, or simple and down to earth. It can be about aesthetics, how mobile photography is a part of your life or about learning and community. It is whatever YOU want to say from your perspective in your photos or in the project.

I think this was particularly important given the very open nature of the guidance, especially for beginners, to emphasize that the reason for this openness was that it was their own voice and decisions

that they were exhibiting.

### ***Vancouver and the exhibition in Montreal***

While I had also invited the Vancouver group to create an exhibition in their city, and asked them to search out exhibition spaces and times, however, as of yet a Vancouver exhibition has not come to fruition. The reasons for this, in addition to my not being physically present there, could be the busy lives of group members and the small size of the group. I am unsure whether the existing culture, transit difficulties, and the presence or absence of potential spaces were influencing factors. At this time, the Vancouver members were happy to participate with the Montreal group, and had suggested the possibility of creating an exhibition in Vancouver in the future. Although the Vancouver group stopped actively meeting, some continue to participate online through the tagging of their images.

### ***Final stages of planning***

As I was sending out reminders and guidelines, asking for artist statements and photos, the women also reminded me about final preparation matters that needed attending to, such as the creation of a Facebook event invitation. At the end of February, just before the March exhibition setup I invited those who were interested to a mini meet-up to “talk about anything exhibition-related (photos, artist statements, setup, vernissage...).” This meeting was scheduled for one hour, as it would be followed with another project that I was co-creating for Nuit Blanche (Hart & Carter, 2015). I invited members of *Her Mind’s Eye* to attend if they were interested. Approximately four of *Her Mind’s Eye* members attended the meeting, and participated in this secondary exhibition as well. At the meeting, their experience and confidence in collaborative planning and creative problem solving was evident. To me, this spoke to the cross-over that occurred between our collective photographic production facilitated by our close creative community, and the overlapping use of similar social media platforms in all our collaborations, including event organization and exhibition development.

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, we met as a full group at the exhibition space, following Marie Soleil’s suggestion: “*Everyone will get to see the space, and then we could have the meeting with the space in mind*” I agreed and asked if there was a place we could talk nearby, and Marie Soleil responded with her detailed plan of action that included a café meeting (with spaces that could facilitate us) and a photo walk. As was exemplified by Marie Soleil’s proposal of our meeting space and group agenda, after four or five months, several of the women were beginning to step forward in co-organizing our group actions, decisions, and activities. The process of creating the exhibition especially helped us to align our visions and enabled us to work together in a manner that represented more and more a de-centralized leadership. Having group members propose the meeting locations was great, as it expanded the scope of our

physical meeting spaces, which previously had been primarily university-adjacent (*Later, Marie Soleil offered to facilitate Her Mind's Eye after I moved, and was quickly supported by the women.*)

The vernissage/opening night of the exhibition was planned for March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014, about six days after our installation. The timing of the vernissage was coordinated in two places – in private Facebook messages to me, and within the public group messaging chats on Facebook. First, several group members agreed in a Facebook chat about a time that was ideal for them. In a leadership position, I was able to pause the finalization of this plan in order to check that it was in fact going to benefit as many group members as possible. In short order, several individuals who had conflicts, special needs, or scheduling limitations contacted me privately to express their concerns, and their desire to be present at the vernissage. This made it possible for me to act as an intermediary for them, rather than simply having the majority who are in agreement and online at a given moment decide upon the finalized course of action. Negotiations however were relatively simple in this way. Because some group members were comfortable enough to question and suggest alternatives to the time that I had originally arrived upon as best for everyone (a time which I had decided upon based on my knowledge of the needs of few), and others had contacted me privately, this resulted in a successful compromise. Ultimately, the length of time of our vernissage was extended, while this negotiation also ensured that the core of the event was accessible to everyone. We also decided that, as was the case with the exhibition, the Facebook event invite would be clearly bilingual so that everyone was welcome.

Many further details were discussed between members of the group at that point. Group members decided on sending preliminary vernissage invitations to their networks, telling people to mark the date on their calendars while we were finalizing the translations for the Facebook event. Soon, those who asked for information through a joined Facebook chat, such as confirmations on the date, time, and materials for hanging, were answered quickly by a variety of different well-informed group members. For those who were busy, it was difficult to follow some more complex message threads, and so this was very useful when they could ask and get a rapid and concise response on the final decisions from someone “in the know.” Everyone took up responsibility for informing others, for watching out for others, and for raising issues that they felt needed addressing within the Facebook messaging/chat system, and also in person. Around this time, Joanna offered to assist me with emailing people individually to check in on artist statements and other matters, and I was very thankful.

Near the end of February, I made one “final request” for group members to send me their artist’s statements and announced that I would be offline that night, as I recognized that I had been online fielding questions at all hours of the day for many days. I posted a message stating, “I’ll be offline tonight because I’ll be online all week.” I added that perhaps I would see some of the group members at the café the following day for our mini-pre exhibition meeting. For me, this was (somewhat) a step to

pull myself a bit away from the online space, to get a breath of fresh computer-free air, and to make myself available in-person. Meeting in person was particularly useful as questions were answered and plans were made more quickly this way, despite the convenience of online communications.

### ***Printing, Framing and Hanging***

The decisions regarding the layout and design of the exhibition were made together with group members, both during our in-person meet-ups, and were confirmed within Facebook messages. Jodi had proposed that we consider using affordable square frames with black borders from Ikea, while I had familiarity with using rare earth magnets, which I also had a collection of at home. In order to create continuity to the exhibit and to improve its professional appearance, it was decided that each person would have one framed image, which they could incorporate into their layout as they chose.

Some decided to create a grid and to include all the images as a single print within their frame. Others chose to create several large prints, while others still experimented with sizes and staggering their layout. I had also provided another mockup exemplifying how images could be arranged within each frame. I believe that the group members' resulting experimental organization of their photos was aided by the uniformity and equal proportions of all of the images, as they were each square and printed according to the women's request in standardized small, medium and large sizes. During the hanging of the exhibition, we also collectively influenced and inspired one another. Although no maximum was given for the number of prints, the loose suggestion of 4 or 5 was given, and formatting possibilities provided (as illustrated in the Photoshopped mockup below).



*Figure 79.* Inspiration & ideas for exhibition layout and hanging of photos, for participants, posted on Facebook wall. Photoshop mockup image created Feb 21, 2014.

In Montreal, I did not have access to a car, as my own family was not there and I also lived on a somewhat tight budget as a student and woman in the city. Despite her tight school schedule, Haley

stepped forward to help drive to Ikea to pick up the frames. Without her help I imagine I might have not been able to get the frames in time for the exhibit, or to arrive safely, as we found the glass to be highly breakable. There were many of us, and so many frames were required.



*Figure 80.* Hot off the presses! The “scroll” of printed photos at Hexagram, ready to be cut into individual images.

While the printing of both the images, and the tags were done by me at the Concordia’s printing facilities (within Hexagram’s new media research institute), and at my local printers, the collection and translation of artist statements and formatting of photographs and layout decisions were completed by the participants themselves, with two or three exceptions. I decided to print the photos myself at Hexagram primarily due to affordability, and the ability to produce high-quality images. This was also good, as, in early February, one group member mentioned that she didn’t have a printer at home and asked for help with printing her pictures. On several occasions, group members joined me at Hexagram, either to participate in the printing and preparing of the prints, or to discuss an issue with translation, or work on the artists’ statements. Veronique contacted me through a private message on Facebook to ask about dimensions etcetera, as she was very interested in the technical side of printing. I invited her to join me with printing at Hexagram. Although we began hanging the exhibition on February 25<sup>th</sup>, my last call for printing was on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, as I needed to re-print a few images that had come out darker than anticipated, and a few women asked for a reprint, as they were inspired to make changes after seeing the exhibition installed.

We made a few changes to the exhibition prior to our vernissage on March 7<sup>th</sup>. Regarding the layout, Joanna said: “I very much like the frames and size and amount of photos.” Lastly, in addition to their short bios and artist statements, everyone was asked if they had titles for their images. I explained: “You can interpret this however you like, even using comments from Instagram or hashtags as a way to title. Just make sure that I know which image has what title. With the help of Marie Soleil, @elodielilysamuelle, and Joanna, we created a table that was sent to all group members through Google docs to confirm titles, bios, exhibition info, etcetera, though I recall, this didn’t work for everyone and

## *Language*

Following the start of *Her Mind's Eye*, the matter of language hadn't frequently arisen or been very visible during the regular course of our group. I believe that this is likely due to two main factors: 1.) that as the facilitator, I was primarily English speaking, coming from an English university (and conducting a research project primarily in English) and 2.) some individuals who were interested in the group, but not proficient in English, may have decided not to proceed due to difficulties with communication, which would have resulted in a group that was mostly comfortable with participating in English. While one woman told me that my French writing was comprehensible through Facebook messaging, I still struggled greatly, and the consent form, in English only, likely gave an accurate vision of the language difficulties that would arise throughout in our group future. Three or four members of the group, however, did identify themselves as primarily French speaking Montrealers. Three others were fluently bilingual, several of us had basic working knowledge of French (myself included), some had medium to advanced knowledge of French, and several Montrealers did not speak French (having recently come to Montreal from other provinces and countries). In the exhibition preparation, the issue of language came strongly to the forefront within our group for the first time, as it was connected to our choice of location (in a popular and predominantly French speaking neighbourhood of Montreal), and of course, Montreal's language laws which dictate how and where English and French may be displayed particularly within storefronts. Indeed, previously our group existed primarily in online spaces and temporary free urban spaces, and now with the exhibition, we were establishing the physical presence of *Her Mind's Eye* in the city. We now had to negotiate with the laws and controls governing the space we were exhibiting in, along with the requirements of others living in the cities we were a part of.

As the venue was a French historical bookstore, in a predominantly Francophone location, and it was required by law to present French signage in the window (though there is no law forbidding English to be presented in smaller accompanying text), they provided us with a stipulation for the exhibition. While we could do anything in the exhibition space, the posters in the front windows were required by the owner to be entirely in French. One member of the group, for whom English was her first language, expressed her feeling that disallowing English was discriminatory. I proposed that one possible solution was to keep the advertisement primarily photo-based, or we could try to convince the gallery owner to include our collective's name in English and in French within the window advertisements. This meant that we now had to consider a French translation of the group name. The same woman from the group who had found it discriminatory also mentioned that changing the group name would be silly, and not to change it, to which other members agreed at this time that another group name in French was not necessary. (I believe this may be in part because of difficulties with translation of the name.) I considered this, and responded that at least a bilingual exhibition description would be needed, to which

one group member who was primarily English speaking but bilingual, responded enthusiastically and supportively, “it will be nice to have a bilingual exhibition.” After I chatted independently with both English, bilingual, and French members of the group, a solution was devised to create a poster that did not include our group name, but rather, sought to provide an exhibition title that was accessibly bilingual, meaning that although it was technically French, it could be read and mostly understood by both Anglophones and Francophones, and would meet the requirement of the exhibition site that it be in French. After further chatting with Marie Soleil who helped greatly in creating a “bilingual” exhibition title, we decided on: “Groupe de photographie mobile: Visions Montréalaises et Vancouveroises.” The second part meaning visions of Montreal women (montréalaises). As this language condition was only for the front street-facing windows, we displayed our group name “*Her Mind’s Eye*” within the gallery space, on Facebook and on Instagram announcements.

I took this as an opportunity to try out my basic French within my facilitation of the group, in order to invite artist statements in French, which I would be happy to translate into English with help from others and/or Google translator. Having lived in Montreal for many years, I am aware of the complexities and sensitivities around language and the need for acceptance/inclusion and recognition from all sides. I wanted to be careful to respect everyone, since I knew that my own language limitations (being less than fluent in French), and the existing English orientation of the group might prove difficult for French speakers. All in all, our group made efforts to respect one another’s languages, particularly as it became more visible, and the exhibition had us working together more intensely towards our common goal. French and English group members offered to help with translations and edited one another’s work, and the next group meeting saw more spoken French emerging, with some women providing summaries and translations for those who couldn’t understand French. This benefited those who were less comfortable in English, who now had an opportunity to speak more.

### ***Selling / Auctioning images***

In my mind, the choice to sell, a choice that we were able to easily decide upon as a group, was a significant development! Independently, many of the women did not propose an individual desire to profit from her work. However, when proposed as a group initiative, more than three quarters of the members were on board. Other members had wanted to keep their images for their own appreciation, and thus did not participate in the sale. In fact, excitement rose around deciding matters related to the prices and the selling of our photographs. When trying to sell our images as a group, most of us developed a laissez-faire attitude towards whether or not the images would sell, despite perhaps an internal hopefulness that they would. On the same hand, if they didn’t sell, this meant that the women could take their own prints back home with them, which was a reward in itself.

We experienced difficulties in determining prices, and deciding how to set up selling procedures. The group decided to employ both the silent auctioning technique (for the framed/central images only) together with the individual pricing technique for secondary images. This, understandably, led to some confusion (a factor which we acknowledged and learned from later.) The auction did, however manage to draw in more purchases of the images than the simple labeling of prices had, and further bypassed the difficulties we'd experienced with the gallery. The possibility that the gallery/staff might not properly handle sales was a cause of concern. Although the owners had agreed upon a lower cost for renting the exhibition space, (and in turn, we would promote the space through our exhibition and group, and prepare an exhibition in short notice for the open March slot), a further part of the agreement was that the owners would facilitate sales. During the exhibition period, however, one of the group members had been told by a friend who had visited the exhibition, that when she asked if the images were for sale, a sales person had replied that they were not (despite our having provided the gallery with a detailed price list which corresponded to the numbering and description of each of the images). Whether this was due to simply a mistake in their early stages of beginning as an exhibiting space, or was due to an indifference towards our work and the value of selling our work, I do not know.

What came across as most significant to me was that together, we tried to sell our work and create a professional quality exhibition, and even without great success (only about four images sold during the vernissage), we felt encouraged even more so to try again, and to find solutions to obstacles. The fact that we tried and saw success in many areas was inspiring for future possibilities. Some group members contacted me after the exhibition with future ideas for presenting our work at famous local arts events, and cultural hubs/craft fairs, and later in the year group members organized two more exhibitions. It is especially meaningful that the site we selected for our exhibition was located on a walk-able commercial avenue locally recognized as a valuable cultural space. The space is located in a predominantly French portion of the city but was adjacent to both English and French neighbourhoods, and close to a central metro station. As such it was physically accessible to the Montreal members of her minds eye, and is frequented by the public. Many of the women mentioned bringing their friends and family to the exhibition, or visiting it independently to watch the goings on, including who came to view the exhibition and how they observed the photos. As the space was located within a bookstore, it further served as a bridge to community accessible culture. At the closing of this exhibition we held the critique in which group members were invited to consider each of the women's printed photographs, which they had selected, arranged and installed in the gallery with their titles and artists. The importance of this exhibition for the women of her minds eye could be seen in the great excitement of the group following the exhibition, and the development of two more exhibitions which followed in close succession (mere months apart) and were led by two of the group members. Numerous other ideas for distribution and, in



space in this thesis where her individuality, personal style, and the subjects or themes that she chose to explore within *Her Mind's Eye* can be represented clearly. General themes are explored within the *Discussion* section, Part IV.



*Figure 83.* Setup complete! The exhibition statement is at the entrance, French (left) and English (right).



*Figure 84.* Vernissage and a photo shoot-off! Opening night was lots of fun, members of *Her Mind's Eye* invited family, friends, significant others and more!

## CHAPTER 12. *Her Mind's Eye's* Exhibition Catalogue

### *Introduction: The importance of her voice*

The process of developing the exhibition ranged from the selection of photographs, to each woman's writing of her artist's statement and bio, choosing the location, and exhibition decisions, all of which were organized through the many efforts and collective collaboration of the women of *Her Mind's Eye*. Unlike the preceding *Description* chapter #*SaturdayInHerMind*, that included individually and collectively generated participant-selected themes, followed by my development of emergent sub-categories and subsequent interpretation drawing upon participant creations, this section intentionally minimizes my voice, so as to forefront the women's own presentation of their work in this culminating first exhibition. Their selections were developed through an arts-based process of creation and analysis that occurred through ongoing photographic investigation, a visual deep reading/revision of the work they have produced, selection of works (completed with the use of a guideline for deciding how to create a series or selection of works for exhibition), which are then described within the artist statements and reflective biographies written by each of the group members.

Like an exhibition at the end of a Studio Arts course, this exhibition is the *Her Mind's Eye* community's and individual woman's conclusions of the process they have experienced and engaged with throughout the study. Therefore, this chapter serves as a sort of exhibition catalogue, for those who were not able to visit the exhibition in person in order to experience the photographic works and artists' statements. Unfortunately, it cannot replace the relational knowing that occurs at exhibitions through meeting the women group members of *Her Mind's Eye* in-person, during our enthusiastic celebration of our successful collaboration and sharing of visions and voices.

In Part four, the final *Discussion* section, I once more put on my researcher interpretive lens and draw upon some of these works and artist's statements to explore the central themes of the study and review how content from this exhibition speaks to the initial questions. This is to provide another level and way of approaching and interpreting the content, rather than seeking to provide a concluding statement, some greater truth, or more complete/finale insight, than that which is presented by each woman herself within this exhibition, and throughout her own photographic practice as can be seen in many individuals' online Social Media Photography galleries. Some of the questions this exhibition speaks to include: *What are women's experiences of the urban environment? How could the sharing around issues of daily life experiences through visual/digital means contribute to an overall sense of well-being in the city—and facilitate women's abilities to address issues of critical importance to themselves, and society? Lastly, how might it [participation in Her Mind's Eye] enable the creation of personal and professional networks of women in urban communities that traverse physical and cultural boundaries?* As a researcher/facilitator, I discuss these questions directly within the *Discussion* section.

## *EXHIBITION CATALOGUE*

**Groupe de photographie mobile:** Visions Montréalaises et Vancouveroises.

**Through *Her Mind's Eye*:** Women's views of urban life explored in on and offline mobile photography community

### *Exhibition Statement*

*Her Mind's Eye* is an exploratory, creative and contemporary women's mobile photography community that exists both physically (through in-person meetings) and digitally (in online social media spaces). The group was designed to support women in learning and exploring mobile photography, new technologies, and Instagram within an encouraging, flexible, and supportive mobile art creation community for women.

Through active online and in-person participation, the group explores how the community-development of strengths and capabilities present in social media applications like Instagram can be utilized to create "real life" connections between diverse individuals with like interests, in order to form city-based, digital/physical composite networks of people interested in artistic development.

Simultaneously, we investigate how experiences of physical places (the cities of Montreal and Vancouver) can be shared amongst us in the digital world. In addition to developing new networks and opportunities for creative growth, the group has the goal of exhibiting and promoting each woman's artwork.

There are two core groups, one in Montreal and one in Vancouver. We began with the very open ended question of "how do I see and experience living in the city?" Through the intimate and immediate aesthetic of mobile photography, this project seeks to illustrate women's experience of living in the urban environment, as they choose to represent it.

**@Joanna\_shot\_that**

**Johanna Holmes** explore la variété des environnements urbains en amalgamant des items communs et inattendus. Elle est fascinée par tous les éléments qui nous unissent dans cette vaste ville, si diversifiée. La série de photos qui est présentée dans cette exposition fait écho aux cheminements de tous, aux gens que l'on rencontre et à cette paix intérieure que nous recherchons, au travers cette ville parfois envoûtante.

*“Joanna Holmes explores the diversity of our urban environments by bringing common and unexpected items together. She is transfixed by all the elements that unite us in this large multifarious city. The series of prints presented in this exposition echoes the paths each of us walk, people we meet and inner peace we are all searching for in this sometimes daunting city.”*



Figure 85. @Joanna\_shot\_that's exhibition series

**@Elodielilysamuella**

Comme elle utilise les transports en commun et qu'elle fréquente le centre-ville à tous les jours depuis les huit dernières années, Elodie a choisi « la vie de l'utilisateur » comme série photo pour cette exposition. Elle souhaite que cette séquence mette en lumière tous les charmes de cette ville, que ce soit les petits détails insignifiants ou la présence d'infrastructures imposantes dans certains recoins de la ville.

Une montréalaise autoproclamée, Elodielilysamuella est uneoureuse de rencontres et de bons plats. Un livre captivant accompagné d'un café ou bien une sieste composent ses moments de solitude favoris. Elle espère trouver la beauté et l'émerveillement dans l'ordinaire du quotidien.

*“Having taken the public transportation and having been part of the downtown life each day for the past eight years now, Elodie chose ‘life of a commuter’ as the subject of this exhibition. She hopes this sequence brings light to the charm of the city inside and out, from insignificant details to the imposing infrastructures present in certain areas.”*

*A self proclaimed Montrealer, Elodielilysamuella is a lover of community gatherings and nice food. A captivating book and a coffee, or a nap, constitutes her favourite alone time. She strives to find beauty and awe in the mundane and usual sights of the everyday.*



Figure 86 @Elodielilysamuella's exhibition series

**@Joyjoyjodi**

Comme j'ai une formation en photographie, je n'étais pas impressionnée par Instagram au début. Par contre, j'ai découvert qu'Instagram ne s'agit pas seulement de photos, c'est surtout une façon de faire partie d'une communauté et de partager notre monde personnel avec les autres.

Ce fut un plaisir de faire partie de cette communauté à travers Instagram; même si je vois Instagram comme une grande communauté, c'était amusant de créer et définir notre propre vision.

J'essaie de prendre des photos pour montrer mes observations sans être vraiment à la mode. Cependant, je suis souvent coupable de prendre des photos de chats.

**Jodi Simms** a grandi dans la province de Terre-Neuve et a habité pendant six ans au Japon, avant de s'installer à Montréal pour poursuivre sa maîtrise en Éducation des arts à l'Université de Concordia. Elle est bachelière en Arts visuels de l'Université Memorial de Terre-Neuve, et a notamment suivi une formation en textiles. Jodi est une artiste multidisciplinaire en arts visuels, dont le textile, la photographie, la peinture et l'imprimerie.

*“As a 'trained' photographer, I turned my nose up at Instagram at first. However I soon discovered that it is not about the photos on Instagram, but about coming together and showing our own personal worlds to others.*

*It's been a pleasure being a part of a social-media based photography community; although I see Instagram as one big community anyways, it is nice just to have a defined one.*

*While getting involved with her mind's eye, I try to take pictures of my observations and I try not to take mainstream photos, however I am guilty of taking cat pictures.”*

***Jodi Simms** is originally from Newfoundland, but before moving to Montreal in August 2012 to pursue her Masters in Art Education at Concordia University, she lived in Japan for six years. She has a BFA in the Visual Arts from Memorial University of Newfoundland where she trained in textiles. She considers herself a textile artist as well as a photographer, painter and printmaker.*



Figure 87. @joyjoyjodi's exhibition series

**@Marjobourge**

## &lt;&lt;City Blues&gt;&gt;

ville /vil/	blues /bluz/
<i>nom féminin. Vie que l'on mène en ville</i>	<i>nom masculin : familier. Mélancolie, cafard</i>

Le crépuscule, un cimetière, l'hiver, un tunnel – tous ces mots peuvent évoquer le cafard, la mélancolie. Toutefois, comme le dit si bien le dicton, après la pluie vient le beau temps. Dans le plus creux de l'hiver, dans le cœur du cimetière, dans le ventre du tunnel, la lumière peut briller, la couleur peut exister – l'espoir est là.

**Marjolaine Bourget** est une photographe argentine amateur qui a découvert les joies de la photographie numérique avec Instagram. Elle aime errer dans Montréal, capturant à l'aide de son objectif des paysages et des édifices connus et découvrant de nouvelles places, de nouveaux quartiers et de l'art urbain. Elle aime également prendre en photo Yoko Tsuno, sa chatte folle, mieux connue sous #yokotsunothethebeautiful.

## City Blues

cit·y /sitē/	blue /blōo/
noun : informal. A place or situation characterized by a specified attribute	adjective : informal. (of a person or mood) melancholy, sad, or depressed

Dusk, a cemetery, winter, a tunnel – these words can evoke depression and melancholy. Nevertheless, as the saying goes, every cloud has a silver lining.

In the midst of winter, in the heart of a cemetery, in the middle of a tunnel, there can be light, there can be colour, there can be a silver lining – there is hope.

**Marjolaine Bourget** is an amateur film photographer who discovered the joys of digital photography with Instagram. She loves roaming the city of Montreal, capturing well-known landscapes and buildings as much as discovering new places, neighbourhoods and urban art. She also loves to take pictures of her crazy cat Yoko Tsuno, better known as #yokotsunothethebeautiful.



Figure 28 @Mariobourge's exhibition series

**@Paddleon**

Alors que les gens sont en mouvement perpétuel, d'une pièce à l'autre, d'une extrémité de la ville à l'autre ou encore en traversant les paysages ruraux par les autoroutes, Sarah tente de capter ces entre-deux. Les nombreuses tentes de sans-abris plantées au long des chemins de fer suscitent chez elle une réflexion sur l'état d'esprit qui permet de faire avec si peu. Cela lui a inspiré la lithographie contrastée présentée dans le cadre de cette exposition.

Résidente de l'île-Perrot depuis les 24 dernières années, **Sarah Robinson** crée en photographie, en transfert polaroid, en acrylique, en aquarelle, en art graphique et en illustration. Depuis 2011, elle étudie à l'Université de Concordia en Beaux-Arts, plus spécifiquement en médias imprimés, tels que la lithographie, la sérigraphie et en Intaglio (gravure). Souvent, elle incorpore la photographie digitale à son travail.

*“As people are continually moving, whether from one room to another, an across-town commute, or through countryside and highways, Sarah aims to capture the essence of the in-between. The several homeless tents set up along the train tracks make her wonder of the spirit to manage with so little. This inspired her contrasted digital lithography piece presented in this exposition.”*

*Living in L'île-Perrot for the past 24 years, **Sarah Robinson** works in photography, polaroid transfers, acrylics, watercolour, book arts and graphic arts. Since 2011, she has been a student in Concordia's Fine Arts program, specifically in print media; lithography, screenprinting and Intaglio (etching) often incorporating digital photography in her work.*



Figure 89. @Paddleon's exhibition series

## @Van\_manka

N'étant pas une artiste qui commercialise ses œuvres, elle utilise la photographie classique ainsi que la photographie mobile comme une source de créativité, puis comme un moyen à la fois de partager des histoires et créer un contact avec d'autres.

Manka peut être trouvée sur Instagram sous le nom de Van\_manka. En plus de faire de la photographie, elle aime autant le grand air qu'un bon bouquin ou bien un débat sur l'histoire. De la Hongrie à Montréal vers Vancouver, elle suit son cœur, observant son environnement dans une recherche incessante de la beauté et du bonheur; que ce soit dans un lever de soleil, des nuages, ou la lumière dansante se reflétant sur un lac.

*“Not an artist by trade, Manka uses photography and mobile photography as a creative outlet and a way to connect, share stories, and add a smile”*

*Manka can be found on Instagram under the alias Van\_Manka. Aside from dabbling in photography, Manka enjoys the outdoors as much as a good book and a debate about history. From Hungary to Montreal to Vancouver, she continues to follow her heart in a relentless search for beauty and happiness in her surroundings, be it in a sunrise, clouds, or the glimmering light on a lake.*



Figure 00 @Van\_manka's exhibition series

**@Hannah\_nutwood**

**Shannon Stuart** vit à Vancouver en ce moment et peut généralement être localisée sous une pile de couvertures, donnant des câlins à son mari, son chat, ou bien en train de tricoter. Elle n'est pas une photographe. Shannon prend photos pour ressentir; se souvenir d'une sensation, une couleur, une époque, un endroit. Elle rassemble ces choses comme une pie collecte les objets brillants. Malgré le fait que Shannon habite dans une ville, son appareil photo se dirige souvent vers le ciel et les arbres, loin des voitures, des personnes et des choses qui la rendent inconfortable.

*“Shannon Stuart lives in Vancouver these days and can usually be found under a pile of blankets cuddling her husband, or her cat, and knitting. She is not a photographer. She takes pictures to feel to remember: a mood, a colour, a time, a place. She collects these things like a magpie collects shiny objects. While Shannon lives in the city, her camera lens usually strays up towards the trees and sky; away from the cars and people and things that makes her uncomfortable.”*



Figure 9.21 @Hannah\_nutwood's exhibition series

**@Livenow**

*“La vie au carré - Véronique Leduc est diplômée d'une Technique en graphisme et elle a grandi dans la région de Montréal. Elle est passionnée par les arts graphiques et le voyage. Créative, ses médiums favoris sont la photo, la lithographie et l'illustration. Curieuse, Véronique adore explorer la ville à pied ou à vélo. Véronique capture ses trouvailles urbaines (textures, lettrage, graffiti, bâtiments abandonnés, etc.) et les partage sur Instagram. Elle s'est joint au projet Her Mind's Eye pour découvrir la ville à travers de nouveaux regards, pour créer des liens et pour apprendre de nouvelles techniques.”*

Life in a square - **Véronique Leduc** comes from the region of Montreal, and holds a diploma in Technical Graphic Arts. She has a passion for graphic arts and travelling. Creative, her favourite mediums are photography, lithography, and illustration. Curious, Véronique loves exploring the city by walking or on her bike. She then captures her urban findings (textures, lettering, graffiti, old abandoned buildings etc.) and shares them on Instagram. She joined the *Her Mind's Eye* project to discover the city through new eyes, create bonds and learn new techniques.



Figure 92. @Livenow's exhibition series

**@Propelling381**

**Laura Rhodes** est une voyageuse, et voit chaque ville dans laquelle elle habite à travers les yeux d'un visiteur. Montréal est spécial pour elle, car cette ville invite gracieusement Laura à la visiter à différents moments et chapitres de sa vie.

*“Laura Rhodes is a traveller, and approaches each city she lives in from the perspective of the visitor. Montreal is special because it graciously invites her to visit again at different moments and chapters in her life.”*



Figure 93. @Propelling381's exhibition series

## @Llangset

Les villes deviennent un lieu par la connectivité entre les gens. L'art est simultanément à propos de l'identité et la connexion. Il est étrange comment une chose qui est à la fois publique et anonyme sur Instagram peut à la fois être personnel et intime. Il existe une dualité, une révélation de l'environnement tel que vécu par l'individu (à travers les yeux de son propre esprit). Il y a donc une tension entre le désir de montrer la vérité et le désir de plaire à l'auditoire.

**Lisa Langsetmo** est une scientifique, et une « cité-phile » qui considère désormais Montréal comme son chez-soi. Elle aime observer l'intégration de la nature dans l'environnement urbain. Ses chasses à l'image les plus fréquentes ont lieu dans les parcs, les églises et les ruelles de Montréal.

*“Cities become places by connecting people. Art is simultaneously about identity and connection. It is strange how something that is both public and anonymous on Instagram, can also be both personal and intimate. There is a duality, a revelation of the environment as it experienced and of one's self (in her mind's eye). There is a tension between the desire to speak the truth and the desire to please.”*

*Lisa Langsetmo is a scientist, and a city-phile who now calls Montreal home and she loves to see the integration of nature in the urban environment. Her most frequent photo-haunts are the bounteous parks, churches, and alleys of Montreal.*



Figure 94. @Llangset's exhibition series

@Lunule365

**Susan Rowe Harrison**, connue aussi en tant que Lunule365 sur Instagram, est une artiste, une designer et une éducatrice, basée à Toronto. Elle aime surtout créer. [www.lunule.com](http://www.lunule.com)

*“Lunule365 on Instagram is **Susan Rowe Harrison**. She is an artist, designer, educator based in Toronto who loves to make things. [www.lunule.com](http://www.lunule.com)”*



Figure 95. @lunule365's exhibition series

## @Morningmango

*Dans les milieux urbains où les interactions sociales peuvent être complexes et confuses, on peut compter sur les plantes comme amies silencieuses.*

<<Morning mango>> est une insulaire qui vogue entre la ville de Vancouver et ses banlieues, captant les rayons de soleil tout en trouvant un réconfort dans la verdure et la solitude. En d'autres termes, elle se ressource et trouve sa place dans les frissons des feuillages sous un rayon de soleil.

*"In images that are the first paragraph to a story.*

*Or the second, or the third.*

*In cities where social interaction can be complex and confusing, plants are quietly reliable companions and new friends."*

*Morning mango is an island woman who wanders through Vancouver and its suburbs, snatching rays of light and finding comfort in greenery and solitude. She finds her place in the shudder of a tendril of green, in patches of sunlight.*



Figure 96. @Morningmango's exhibition series

## @Laurelmhart

La vie de citadin est une vie fracturée. Les événements sont inscrits dans des calendriers électroniques et sont documentés à travers des photos carrées. Malgré cela, nous choisissons parfois de jouer le rôle de beauté, de désir et d'être désiré, de protecteur, de créateur, et de destructeur.

L'image se répète comme un souvenir; l'image électronique arrive dans un outil mobile qui se tient dans une main encore et encore et traverse différentes plateformes. Nous allons trop vite pour donner un sens à tout cela. Comme les feuilles qui tombent et les Sakura qui fleurissent, nous pouvons apprécier les photographies carrées de nos villes pour leur flamboyance, mystère, et temporalité.

**Laurel Marie Hart** est une candidate au Doctorat à l'Université de Concordia, et la fondatrice du projet « Her Mind's Eye ». Elle s'intéresse à l'approche informelle ainsi qu'aux communautés créatives qui existent en ligne et hors ligne. Elle aimerait pouvoir étendre cette exposition au delà des limites de Montréal dans d'autres villes-sœurs, commençant par Vancouver.

*City living is fractured living. Events slot into electronic calendars blocks, and are documented in photo squares. Still, we sometimes choose to perform the roles of beauty, being desire and desired, keeper, creator, and destroyer.*

*The image repeats as a memory; the electronic image arrives in a hand held device time and again and jumps across platforms. We move too quickly to make sense of it all. Like fall leaves and sakura blossoms, we appreciate the city squares for their vibrancy, mystery, and temporality.*

***Laurel Marie Hart** is a PhD student in Montreal, and the founder of Her Mind's Eye. She is interested in informal learning and creative communities that exist in online/offline environments. She would like to extend this exhibit beyond Montréal, to tour in other cities including the sister city of Vancouver.*



**@Solelidad**

*“Son approche de la photographie mobile est intuitive. En tant que spectatrice du quotidien, Marie Soleil apprivoise ce médium dans des instants contemplatifs et parfois contrastés. Des observations sociétales sont perceptibles dans les sujets abordés par ses photos, tel le malaise ressenti devant la prise d’un égo-portrait touristique ayant pour décor un drame humain vécu simultanément. Ou bien ce que dégage le geste affirmatif de la cuillère, lors d’une conversation amicale qui se prolonge après une tasse de café. À son tour, le public peut élaborer sa propre conclusion des histoires racontées dans ces photos.”*

*Marie Soleil Brosseau est détentrice d’un B.A. en Sociologie et Études urbaines, de l’Université du Québec à Montréal. Le patrimoine culturel est son dada. Elle s’intéresse également aux phénomènes d’appropriation de l’environnement urbain par les citoyens à travers diverses manifestations culturelles.*

Marie Soleil Brosseau approaches photography intuitively. As a spectator of the daily life, she tames this medium through contemplative and sometimes contrasted moments. Societal observations can be perceived in the subjects she addresses in her pictures, like discomfort when a tourist’s selfie is being taken while human drama is simultaneously happening in the background. Or what can be understood in an assertive spoon gesture during a prolonged discussion with a friend, long after the coffee has been drunk. In return, the public can also draw its own conclusions to the stories told in those pictures.

**Marie Soleil Brosseau** has a B.A. in Sociology and Urban studies from l’Université du Québec à Montréal. Cultural heritage is one of her favorite subjects. She is also interested in the phenomena of the citizen’s appropriation of the urban environment through diverse cultural manifestations.



Figure 98. @Solelidad's exhibition series

## Haley

Haley est passionnée par la créativité et les arts, la communauté et la nature. Elle s'inspire donc de la lumière, des couleurs et de l'architecture de Montréal, un milieu empreint d'histoires, de langues et de cultures. Cette ville se découvre mieux par la marche; lors de longues promenades et parcourant les parcs, Haley réfléchit et médite sur la joie de vivre qu'offre Montréal, peu importe la saison. Elle espère que ses photos inspireront d'autres personnes à trouver de la joie dans les moments simples de la vie.

Haley est enseignante et étudiante diplômée à Montréal. Elle est fascinée par le pouvoir des images de communiquer les sentiments. Haley adore lire, voyager et apprendre des nouvelles perspectives.

Haley is passionate about creativity and the arts, community and nature. Haley draws inspiration from light, colours and architecture of this city steeped in histories, languages and cultures. Montreal is a city best discovered by walking; it is on long walks through the city and parks that she reflects and meditates on the joie de vivre of this city, in each season. She hopes her photos may inspire others to find joy in life's simple moments and to share stories through photography.

**Haley** is an educator and graduate student in Montreal. She is fascinated by the power of images to convey meaning and emotion. Haley is passionate about exploring creativity through the arts, community, and experiencing the natural environment. Haley is an avid reader and traveller.



*Figure 00* Haley's exhibition series

## @Vistavista

**Hind Akhiyat** utilise la photographie comme moyen de capturer les moments de son quotidien, mais surtout pour découvrir et interagir avec les différents espaces autour d'elle. Hind est une artiste et une étudiante universitaire qui habite à Montréal depuis 2005. Elle a toujours eu une curiosité non seulement envers cette ville, mais aussi sur nos moyens de communiquer dans cet espace que l'on partage.

*“Hind Akhiyat uses photography as a way to capture moments of her daily life, but most importantly as a way to experience and interact with the different spaces around her. Hind is an artist and a university student who’s been living in Montreal since 2005, she has been curious about the city and the way we interact in this space we share.”*



**@Sarasramblings**

**Sara Macdonald** vient de Vancouver et aime passer son temps à repérer de la nouvelle musique et parler de politique. Elle a appris à considérer son talent naturel pour se perdre, puisque ceci l'aide à découvrir des recoins intéressants de la ville. Elle est nouvellement inscrite sur Instagram, et apprécie en apprendre plus sur la photographie mobile par le biais de ce groupe d'artistes talentueuses.

*“Sara Macdonald is from Vancouver and loves to spend her time checking out new music and talking politics. She has embraced her natural talent for getting lost, as it helps her to discover new and interesting parts of her city. She is new to Instagram and is loving learning more about mobile photography from such a talented group of artists.”*



Figure. 101 @Sarasramblings's exhibition series

## Marie France Berard

*“Vancouver: le présent absent - Marie-France Berard est candidate au Doctorat en Éducation des arts, à l’Université de la Colombie Britannique. Elle adore le cinéma, les balades en ville, discuter de Deleuze, les cafés chaleureux, ainsi que les rêveries.”*

*“Vancouver: The absent present - Marie-France Berard is a PhD candidate in Art Education at the University of British Columbia. She loves cinema, strolling the city, talking about Deleuze, cozy coffee shops and daydreaming.”*



Figure 102 Marie France Berard's exhibition series

### ***Exhibition Conclusion***

In chapter 13, examples of the women's photographs in the exhibition are discussed in relation to some of the themes of *Her Mind's Eye* members' SMPC depictions of their lives in urban environments. Chapter 13 provides an overview of emergent themes of the overall types of photos created within *Her Mind's Eye* and group members' individual accounts over the duration of this study. The representation of categories provided in Chapter 13 may help researchers, women and SMPC community members and facilitators to consider potential commonalities and themes present in SMPC practice. This exhibition chapter is presented as a means of recognizing the individuality of each woman's practice, which cannot effectively be conveyed through a table or series of categories. Just as many different researchers engaged in connected research projects will come up with very different focal representations, differing modes of analysis, and interpretation of findings, so does each participant's photo series within the exhibition speak to each member's own interests, her past, prior studies and creative or artistic practices, and much more.

Additionally, Chapter 13 examines the ways that the women of *Her Mind's Eye* used social media photography as a forum to interact with urban spaces and create networks on and offline, such as increasing awareness and appreciation for everyday life in part through recognizing observations of urban environments seen through others' eyes. The manner in which this exhibition served as a means for establishing a physical space in which to share our voices (or visions) in the city, and as a way for enacting and building our community through the creation of this local/on-the-ground arts and cultural event is also discussed further in Chapter 14.

## PART IV. DISCUSSION

### Introduction to the Discussion

The *Discussion* section presents insights that emerged from the *Description* section along with additional iterations of analysis, interpretation, and understandings recorded during my time as facilitator. Chapter 13 focuses on the photographs. It explores general themes that emerged, then discusses women and urban sites and features. Next it shows how social/mobile photography was used by the women, serving as space for a variety of activities.

The following Chapter 14 then looks to the making and managing of the *Her Mind's Eye*, as a digital and on-the-ground site for women's creative community and collaborative inquiry. It is about the logistics of running such a community. It focuses on *making action possible* (Brinkmann, 2012), by foregrounding women's needs and understanding how features such as community, creativity and voice were supported in this regional social media online and on the ground community. Themes present throughout all stages of the development and enacting of *Her Mind's Eye* included social media photography communities' artistic collaboration, informal learning, and community action research.

*A note on my personal representation and interpretation of participants' work in the study.* The purpose of this *Discussion* session is to provide a final distilled and categorized overview and analysis of findings from *Her Mind's Eye* as they relate to the initial research questions that informed this study. More than the *description*, which sought frequently to forefront participants' voices and actions, it more on my voice as facilitator and researcher to provide further inquiry and interpretation of our collective photographic works.

Although one goal of this section is to share key aspects of SMPCs as they relate to the women, and women's responses to urban life through their photographs, it can by no means fully answer these questions. Rather, this analysis seeks to serve as a partial a map, to guide and inform future individual or collective developments of *Her Mind's Eye*, to inspire and initiate further investigation into SPMCs, and to examine in greater depth key aspects of urban life, which the women of *Her Mind's Eye* presented.

## CHAPTER 13. Her Social/Mobile Photography

### Guiding Question

What are women's experiences of the urban environment?

How could the sharing around issues of daily life experiences through visual/digital means contribute to an overall sense of well-being in the city, and facilitate women's abilities to address issues of importance to themselves, and to society?

### ***Introduction***

The question of women's experiences of the urban environment served as the basis for our inquiry into the urban surroundings of the women of *Her Mind Eye*, through creative photographic practices. This exploration of *our* individual and collective urban experiences became a unifying focal point of *Her Mind's Eye*, a "mission statement," of sorts. This initiating question could be more precisely stated as: What experiences of the urban environment did the women of HME choose to present, and why? This chapter is informed by the Descriptions sections, #SaturdayInHerMind themes and the Exhibition chapter, as both demonstrate the topics and subjects that *Her Mind's Eye* members selected both individually and collectively. Inquiry took place photographically, through written and verbal communications on Facebook, and Instagram, and in person.

This section draws significantly upon the women's own words gathered from artist's statements in describing the ways in which they participated in the mobile photography community (SMPC) *Her Mind's Eye*. Additionally, quotes from the final focus group (in Montreal) are included, as it served as a space for the women of *Her Mind's Eye* to analyze their experiences, actions taken, and desires for the group together as a community, over dinner. I also drew from my knowledge of each woman's individual photographic practices, as well as my interpretation and coding of the images (discussed shortly), as a means of selecting the themes and practices to highlight.

Looking at the data and analysis, this discussion of arts-based and community action research in social media photography incorporates combinations of both participants' voices and my own. In her task to find "the collective in the subjective" the researcher should create "shared meaning in individual experience by opening a space for her respondents' reflections, as well as

her own” (Charmaz & Mitchell, 1996, p. 299). The researcher’s “voice does not transcend experience but re-envisions it” as it “brings fragments of fieldwork time, context, and mood together in a colloquy of the author’s several selves—reflecting, witnessing, wondering, accepting—all at once” (p. 299).

This chapter begins with a table presenting some central content themes in group members’ photographs, and then discusses the ways in which the women used the online space that was their social media photography community to facilitate numerous intellectual and interpersonal interactions, and as personal/individual sites of remembering, sharing, finding and expressing themselves. Then, an overview of some of the notable urban spaces and features depicted in the group’s photographs is presented. Next, I discuss types of SMP practice, reflections on implications for art education, women in cities, and women’s creative SMPC practices in urban settings. This is followed by a discussion about stereotypes and the images that are present and absent within our social media photography practices. Lastly, the conclusion to this chapter paints a picture of social media photography as an intersectional space involving self and environment, memory and selectivity, individual identity, communication and collaboration within community.

### ***Considering photographic analysis within combined, community-based research methods***

Art education research and interdisciplinary studies incorporating visual research methodologies hold numerous examples for analyzing visual and photographic works (Freedman & Stuhr, 2004; Pink, 2006; Rose, 2006; Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001; Weber & Mitchell, 2004, to name a few). Mitchell and Allnutt (2008) state that through “studying and producing photographs and photo albums, we can begin to get a sense of the power of photographs [...] and their capacity for talk” (p. 252). In looking at methods presently used for analyzing photographs, Margolis and Rowe (2011) acknowledge that while photographic researchers such as visual ethnographers frequently ...recognize the importance of understanding the relationship between the researcher and the subject [...] these same researchers rarely address the importance of understanding the relationship between the photographer that created the image and the image itself, or exploring the context in which the images were originally created. (Margolis & Rowe, 2011, p. 341)

Examples they provide of information which accompanies photos include: identification of the photographer and her existing style of practice, embedded information (which for this study's purposes would include metadata like hashtags); and the context of the image, or why it was created, (in *Her Mind's Eye*, this would include an image responding to a #SaturdayInHerMind thematic challenge). For art educators, such surrounding information as context and relationship is especially valuable when analyzing images for meaning, particularly within practitioner research. The study of photographic works created in collaboration, community, and action research, opens up new possibilities for iterations and amalgamations of analysis designed to fit the contexts of art-education.

Margolis and Rowe (2011) primarily reference historical photographs, therefore their approach assumes a lack of active and relational context, such as personally knowing the photographer, discussing the image within community, and intimate forms of knowing. This intimate and engaged forms of knowing can result from social/mobile photographers proximal engagement in lived experience, described by Licoppe (2004) as virtual co-presence. Social/mobile photographic research practices might compare with education technology studies of *communities of practice*, which frequently examine “social patterns and processes that characterize social networks” (Henderson, 2015, p. 88). Coming from digital storytelling, Vivienne and Burgess (2013) look at digital photography practices as part of a social experience of visual inquiry, wherein “the digital image gains affective weight through its use as part of a deeply personal narrative, and in particular through the intense physical co-presence and intimacy of the digital storytelling workshop as a site of social interaction” (p. 283). Such experiences parallel my recognition of the combined nature of the visual, creative, and social communities as features of mobile/social photographic analysis. As an art educator utilizing action research practices through which I have examined the relationships, communication processes and creative productions of the *Her Mind's Eye* community, I have participated in an analysis of photographs in context, in community, in arts-based exhibitions with participants, as an artist, group facilitator, qualitative researcher, friend, and woman. My incorporation of these multiple ways of knowing in the analysis of photographs represents why Rolling (2010) proclaims that art educators must be free to “generate contentious admixtures of methodology and audience, inaugurating fresh perspectives, visions, and insights” (p. 108).

As a member of *Her Mind's Eye* and as a researcher, in analyzing the photographs I drew upon knowledge gained from being present (or adjacent) to their creation and from my engagement in the process of collective knowledge exploration. Social/mobile photographic processes are collective online processes that are accomplished in community and incorporate features of social media photography such as intimacy (Palmer, 2012), connected emotion (Baker, Schleser & Molga (2009), and virtual co-presence (Licoppe, 2004), as well as arts-based research practices including traditions of photographic practice.

Speaking to the presence of relationship and active community in visual research, Weber and Mitchell (2007) recommended “the equaling of power relations ” as a highly effective means of conducting visual research, wherein the researcher and ‘subject’ can come to shared knowledge and understanding (p.171). They look to Pink’s (2001) process of collaborative video as one “where the researcher or community worker works with a group of participants to create a video production” (p.171). They contrast this with participatory video, wherein the researcher is less involved in the production of participatory video and participants develop the video content themselves. Even with this differentiation, “degrees of participation and collaboration can vary” (p.171). In one instance, work that was conceptualized in a participatory manner was later assembled using the digital post-production skills of the researcher/media-makers (Mak, Mitchell & Stuart, 2004). In the study of *Her Mind's Eye*, I experienced a similar oscillation between collaborative and participatory digital creation and research.

At one stage, participants engaged freely in their independent Instagram photo-taking practices, or selected themes with little to no guidance. Their photos were interpreted both by each individual in the moment through comments on their post, selection and presentation for exhibition, and collectively through on and off-line discussion. Although I invited the woman to participate in a process of inductive coding and analysis of their images, and began this with some, ultimately I primarily completed final stages of image analysis, as this process required a significant investment of time, effort, and different modes of inquiry, making use of the inductive qualitative analysis techniques of coding, grouping/identifying themes, then summative descriptions, representations and interpretations of the photos. Although I worked alone in this final stage, the result retained collaborative influence, in that it drew upon this participatory content due to my active presence within our collective inquiry, maintained the focus of accurately representing the true intentions of the individual women, and sought to convey the

collective process of inquiry that occurred within the community. To be sure, I later confirmed these representations with the members of *Her Mind's Eye*. A detailed overview of the stages of the photographic analysis process is in the introduction to the *Discussion* chapters.

Along with this collaboration through social media photography community co-creation, the inductive coding I incorporated was akin to that of Margolis (2005). Margolis and Pauwels (2011), describe a similar visual inductive analysis method as a form of content analysis, incorporating a systematic approach which they derived from grounded theory, as such, it has characteristics of being both inductive and iterative, “inductive in reaching for hypotheses, and deductive in testing theories as they emerged” (p. 353). Holm (2014) examines how Margolis and Rowe’s (2011) photography analysis process, drawn from content analysis, differs from that of Rose (2012), Holm explains that their “coding is theoretically based, which also allows them to pay attention to absent categories. Their categories overlapped, as opposed to the usual requirement of mutual exclusivity” (p.395). They also were free to develop and explore new categories.

***Her Social/Mobile Photographs: Introduction to the types of photographs in Her Mind's Eye***

There are many different types of photographs visible in *Her Mind's Eye*. These invariably connect to each woman's way of approaching SMP practice and SMP community involvement, discussed in greater detail later. Some group members captured scenes or textures that appealed to them on a sporadic basis, while others maintained personal galleries with a core focus (such as an ongoing expression of personal style/design or a specific interest, like architecture). Many had a varied galleries that spanned a range of a aesthetic focus, included informal and social/personal life representations, and independent areas of exploration. In addition we collectively used Instagram through our weekly challenge #SaturdayInHerMind, wherein themes were developed by group members connecting to the topic of lived experiences and the urban environment, were intended to serve as aesthetic and conceptual challenges, and helped to foster community growth as we together communicated and explored a topic visually and in discussion on and off-line.

***Personal uses of SMP/Cs.*** Within *Her Mind's Eye*, social media photography was used as a form of journaling, for practicing awareness of one's environment, engaging in inquiry or curiosity, supporting well-being by creating a positive emotional space shared with others, and as a space

for engaging in affective communication, where members could express a wide range of emotions on a daily basis.

Many of the *Her Mind's Eye* members incorporated SMPC practices into their daily lives as a means of recording, engaging with, and inquiring into features of the city. For example, one photography practice may focus on an individual who notices dream-like scenes found in the everyday, and another might keep a record of colorful urban graffiti art. SMP practices were also used as part of a broader, ongoing approach to investigating or engaging with urban life (where numerous themes are routinely explored), or were initiated in connection to an ongoing philosophical approach to urban life, such as supporting a positive/optimistic or peaceful outlook, recording nature, and beautiful, amusing, or happy moments. These latter practices, as well as those where mobile photography was frequently present or incorporated throughout many corners of life, were all manners of use which I describe as living social/mobile photography, explored later in this chapter. Alternatively, the mobile photography practices of some women were intermittent, for reasons related to technological (device and wireless network) access, issues of accessibility tied to participants' occupations, and personal priorities.

***Collective uses of SMP/Cs.*** In conjunction with our weekly #SaturdayInHerMind thematic prompts, many of the works produced by the women differed in some cases from their usual modes of engagement. For example, @llangset, whose work involved architecture and urban street scenes participated in taking a selfie, creating photographs expressing different emotions or answering personal questions, and exploring new aesthetic styles through point of view challenges. As the thematic categories were selected by individuals and small groups, they frequently, though not always, were connected to that individual's own photographic focal themes. For this reason, as well and because of the cross-pollination of ideas that occurred through *Her Mind's Eye*, our collective and collaborative themes bear similarity to one another and are presented in the following section alongside our personal themes.

***The photographic themes of Her Mind's Eye.*** In the following table, I present examples of the different types of photographs taken. These categories come from my initial coding of *Her Mind's Eye* participant images in their Instagram galleries (these include personal and #saturdayinhermind images) that were taken during this study. Most participants posted

photographs spanning a range of these categories. I have drawn from participants' photos and their associated comments to illustrate the emergent themes to follow. Therefore, the use of a particular woman's image to represent a thematic heading should not be seen as representative of her social media photography practice. The participant's name and the comment associated with the selected image is listed below each image. These visually illustrated categories are then followed by several narrative descriptions of her important features and sites in the urban environment, which were frequently shared in photos, weekly themes, and were discussed by members of *Her Mind's Eye*.

### Me / Who I am...

Memories & identity  
(Who I am, where I come from.)



My Mamie's tea cup, at my uncle's place during the holidays. Cozy and warm  
@Solelidad

My beating heart  
(Our many emotions & moments.)



Cozy  
@Laurelmhart

Loves so many loves  
(Friends, family, and Oh, the cats!)



She doesn't like if I pet her but she loves being where I am all the time... I do not understand my crazy Yoko!  
@Marjobourge

Troubles  
(Problems, sorrow and stress.)



I miss the summer. The sunshine. The green grass. The colours.  
@Elodielily samuelle

Journal of my life  
(My snapshot album/my daily urban life.)



Always take the wrong way home.  
@Llangset

### Photography and the everyday

The poetic  
(Aesthetically  
interesting  
and unusual.)



Snowscapes 2  
@Llangset

A picture is  
worth a  
thousand laughs  
(Visual jokes in  
a weird world.)



At least  
someone was  
happy about the  
salad I made for  
dinner!  
@Joyjoyjodi

Walking dreams  
(Finding magic  
in the  
moonlight.)



Waiting for  
something to  
happen.  
@Hannah\_  
nutwood

Questions  
(Asking and  
thinking about  
questions/ideas  
big and small.)



How does the  
snow weigh on  
you?  
@A\_tornado\_  
named\_joanna

Celebrations and  
common ground  
/ culture (“Oh, I  
can relate.”)



Happy  
valentine's day  
from Xavier!  
@Joyjoyjodi

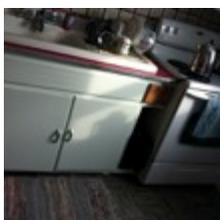
### Places & Spaces....

Neighbourhood  
investigations &  
Social analysis  
(What I see out  
there.)



Alley reading  
@Lunule365

Intimate spaces  
(My home &  
me.)



That watery sun  
after snow,  
coffee after  
shoveling  
@Paddleon

Portraits of our  
cities  
(Architecture,  
and the essence  
of the city.)



Windows and  
bricks  
@Solelidad

Troubled urban  
spaces  
(Problems  
spaces such as  
deterioration or  
unsafe.)



The aftermath  
of a house  
fire in a  
Montreal  
winter will  
break  
your heart.  
@A\_tornado\_  
named\_joanna

Urban ideals  
(Beautiful cities:  
women's urban  
joys and urban  
design ideals.)



Gastown  
@Arbutus7

Figure 103. The photographic themes of Her Mind's Eye

***Her important urban sites and features of the urban environment.*** Whereas the table above represents the diverse themes that emerge from the photos, here I specifically examine features of the urban environment that recurred in the images. These facets of the urban environment represent some prevalent themes in the content produced by *Her Mind's Eye*, drawn from the coding of individual participants' photographs, from group themes and discussions, and from the exhibition selections, including the photographs and artist statements. These should not be seen as inclusive of all women's SMPC depictions of urban life, nor should they be seen as women's only important features and sites, but rather, should be acknowledged as relevant to our community within a specific time and place. Notably, many omissions exist within social media photography, and those that we choose to represent are carefully and intentionally selected (Vivienne & Burgess, 2013).

***Unwelcoming weather and interior spaces.*** This category arises partly from an absence of photos; more specifically, a reduction in numbers of photographs posted, and an increase of images of personal interior spaces. Several months in, when our group participation and sense of community grew, but the quantity of photos posted shrank, I, as a concerned facilitator, asked why. Marjoline's response opened my eyes, her reasoning were the combined factors of the cold and inhospitable winter, and reduced sunlight hours (which interfered with one's ability to take a photo). Another group member agreed, and added that she was running out of things that she wanted to photograph in her interior space.

Since *Her Mind's Eye* began in mid-autumn, interior spaces overall were especially pronounced. Had our group formed in June, our photos would have told more of a summer story; but in Montreal, summers feel short and the winters seem to last forever. This is true for many Canadian women, for whom being indoors often is an undeniable feature of daily life for a large portion of the year. While Vancouverites coped with cold and rain, Montrealers had trouble going out into the very cold temperatures. Our photos showed that many of our personal interior spaces were cozy, colorful, or green (bringing nature inside), and also had other qualities that make inside a good place to be: queue the cats and lattes! Through our photos and communications, we learned that some had adjusted better to the outdoors than others.

***The (mostly) hidden workplace.*** While we occupy a number of different types of interior spaces, there are only so many places where we feel comfortable, and are even freely able to take

pictures. While home and café spaces frequently appeared in our photos, for most of us, worksites are far less common. Several group members commented that their workplace imposed rules disallowing photography or mobile usage on site, while others chose to maintain greater privacy or make a separation between their private life and their work/professional life. Are we allowed to, or do we feel capable of being ourselves and engaging with our personal lives and our ways of engaging with and recording the world, in our workplaces? How might this affect our lives and our ability to develop and inquire in new ways? As a point of comparison, Duffy & Hund (2015) discuss the use of Instagram by self-employed women in the creative industries who make use of social media's capacity to exist between personal and professional boundaries, in order to promote themselves and their work.

***Nature as her comfort and joy.*** For the members of *Her Mind's Eye*, nature was frequently presented as significant to the enjoyment of everyday life, as @morningmango, who lives especially close to nature, reflects within her artist statement for the exhibition: She finds her place in the shudder of a tendril of green, in patches of sunlight [...] snatching rays of light and finding comfort in greenery and solitude [...] in cities where social interaction can be complex and confusing, plants are quietly reliable companions. Many of us sought out these natural spaces in urban environments as nourishment for our minds and spirits. Reflecting during our focus group on our goal to represent our lives in urban environments, Haley pointed out that she looked for small beauties, which frequently involved representations of natural and cultural/historic sites rather than big city buildings or other recognizably urban features. "I never really photograph any city theme or anything like that. I just photographed my [interior] surroundings [...] I could be in the countryside for all you know." Despite our reduced presence outside in winter, some would bravely and briefly venture out into the cold to capture an elusive post snowstorm scene, or an icy, blue-tinged landscape. Even in the deterring cold, plants and animals are calming and comforting, and those who braved the cold were rewarded with an aesthetic winter experience.

***For the love of history and culture.*** Cultural sites, be they historical, architectural, or involving modern artistic creations such as murals, graffiti, and urban creative projects (like pianos placed next to libraries) provide significance and enjoyment within everyday life. @llangset draws meaning and significance from architectural spaces, particularly those which, through their

pairing with nature and weather, express human experiences, emotions, and stories of society and social change. Veronique continuously records graffiti and street art, while @solelidad captures Montreal's architecture and cultural events, lived out in local neighbourhoods. Historical cultural sites, and related items/artifacts act as markers of meaning, memory and beliefs, embodying the spirit of a city and of peoples both past and present. In addition to the meaning they hold, historic sites frequently bring together design and craftsmanship to harmonize with the surrounding nature.

***The transforming characteristics of light and weather.*** Although not as easy to identify as natural and cultural sites, the features of weather and light in the urban environment have an impact, and sometimes a transformative one, on our spaces. The power of light is present through the photographs of *Her Mind's Eye* members. @Elodielilysamuelle's images demonstrate this, as they focus on the presence of the light illuminating the dark winter nights, and a layer of snow. Her reflective rainy streets transform an urban space from something foreboding or ugly, into a site possessing a sort of charm or mystery. Such characteristics are present throughout the women's photos, contrasting dark and light and showcasing the impactful power of a blanket of snow. This can be seen in @llangset's and @elodielilysamuelle's photographs. Light is a source of enjoyment, as it unexpectedly peers through a kitchen window (@paddleon); it can greatly shift how we see and experience a space. While lights made of metal and glass catch our attention and transform a space from romantic, to safe, or not safe (at night), the presence of natural light is powerful. It produces warmth in our homes, reveals textures of history in alleyways in the daytime (@llangset), and in its absence, sometimes we stop taking pictures. As @morningmango and @marjobourge both explained in different ways and from different cities, after a long day at work, our personal time and the car or bus ride home may be a cycle of darkness that begins in a black-skied, early A.M, and doesn't let go until the weekend or spring. In these times, despite our best intentions, fewer photos come to be.

***Her own spaces.*** Women's own spaces are those which are highly accessible to or held by women. Such sites include homes, community spaces such as cafés or workshops, and for those students in the group, workshops and public spaces. Marjolaine designs her home space with bright whites and colorful accents, representing her own style and personality. Sarah

(@paddleon) shows the natural spaces around her home, as well as the university's print studio and transit spaces. We experience few barriers to accessing these "living room" or workshop spaces where we can enter, sit, work, and/or create freely and comfortably, either alone or in the company of others.

In the winter months especially, women's photos frequently showed very intimate close-up representations of their home environments. Many spoke in the focus group of the interiority of city life, such as Haley who said "you know, you have photos of like your apartment and that very much city thing an apartment, having a cat... an inside cat." I felt a sense of congruity with Jodi's photograph of the condensation drops building up on poorly insulated Montreal windows, which reminded me of the struggles of many Montrealers (particularly students), with poor housing conditions, and students' struggles with ineffectual landlords.

***Transit, mobility, and movement.*** Another frequently emerging feature of the urban environment is that of the women's continuous mobility and movement, which includes the physical, mental and emotional experiences of navigating the spaces and places that we pass through in the city. While movement can involve transit, it is also the act of walking around a place, or changing places. Mobility here additionally speaks to changing cities, moving across longer distances, and holding the memories and pulls of the places within ourselves. The photographs produced seek to capture the moods and meanings of these spaces/places that are encountered everyday (in transit) and on our chosen paths. Sarah's photographs frequently depict moments of her experience of commuting not easily captured with blurred scenery, their vague and hazy nature representing the state of suspension and displacement experienced by many entering, existing, and moving perpetually in motion. In her artist's statement, Sara explains that she "seeks to capture the essence of the in-between" experienced by a population constantly in motion. While she is present sitting on a train, in the in-between space of transit, whose backyard is she racing through? What type of presence is this temporary, but long-term and ongoing movement between spaces and what does it mean to be inside and outside of one's home or outside of the city? She also inquires into the connection of place, environment and the human spirit when she sees homelessness on her daily commute, wondering how a foreboding frozen winter forest can serve as a place for someone to live.

Sarah's works begin to illustrate one woman's experience of continuous movement into and out of the city, while others, such as @morningmango present visual images and reflective comments that juxtapose and compare life in our hometowns alongside observations and experiences in our present cities. While @morningmango speaks of her international home, others (like Joanna and myself) speak to memories and families located on the other side of Canada. The issue of women's communities and homes connect with her identity; we are where we came from (Wiley, 1996). The scope of the mobility photographs is wide, and is made up of questions, concerns, appreciation, revisiting memories, and even apathy or resignation. The photos demonstrate the discovery of a moment of joy when walking down a given path; absurdity (usually a sign or object left by another city dweller); or a sliver of light, hope, magic, mystery or charm within these spaces; or transit spaces like metro stations, which are oftentimes imposing, overwhelming, uninspiring, and necessary.

***Living with/in urban features and spaces.*** As we daily live within urban spaces, we encounter these interconnected features and conditions, from weather, nature, transit and built spaces, and we negotiate our relationships to them and to our modes of interaction. @elodielilysamuell's exhibition series the 'life of a commuter' reveals unavoidable spatial and architectural interactions that occur during her transit within Montreal, serving as another representation of transit that demonstrates one finding peaceful co-existence with what be undesirable urban features. Despite what she describes as "imposing infrastructures present in certain areas," she is able to find their charm as a result of combinations of weather conditions and the lighting of spaces, through a photographic investigation that she describes as considering the "insignificant details" of daily transit. In these examples, one can see combinations of transit, the features of light, and of weather presented previously. In this example and others, the members of the *Her Mind's Eye* face unavoidable conditions and features within essential urban spaces that affect them in positive, negative and nuanced ways.

***Her ways of practicing social media photography and SMP community.*** The following uses of Instagram within *Her Mind's Eye* are described in terms of social media photography practice as a space for various forms of emotional, intellectual, and other activities conducted through photographic practices. These categories and the quotes used to illustrate them have been drawn

from participants' artist statements, and in some cases, from focus groups as well. These observations demonstrate that the members of *Her Mind's Eye* approached Instagram in complex manners that likely surpassed the general popular tendency towards using Instagram in a more casual manner. This section opens with an explanation of social media photography practices and SMP communities as an in-between space, existing at the intersection of styles of use, purposes, and audiences. Although here, SMP/C uses in *Her Mind's Eye* are individually explained, in reality, one's SMPC practice is difficult to categorize, therefore the following discussion begins by looking at the in-between nature and integrated complexity of use expressed on these sites.

***The uses and traits of social media photography as seen in Her Mind's Eye:  
A site for introspection, inquiry, engagement, being, collecting and communicating***

***Existing between: At the intersection of art, play, inquiry, the professional, social, and communication.*** The women of *Her Mind's Eye* spoke of their use of Instagram in numerous ways. Some saw it as a game, not a career. Some saw it as a tool used in conjunction with a professional or film camera. In addition to carefully edited and composed "best" photos, in one's Instagram account, funny, cute, or personal photos were sometimes incorporated. In our closing focus group, the topic of different ways of approaching one's Instagram account arose, such as seeing it as a portfolio of one's best work, or a personal album containing snapshots of family, friends and intimate observations of daily life. Most of the community members used it as a space for selective artistically oriented inquiry and selective visual social practices. These members' Instagram accounts included carefully composed photographs as well as the occasional snapshot of a special or interesting person, place, event, or animal (especially the cats!). SMP practices also frequently intersected with other creative arts practices. @livenow who had career oriented photography experience, posted in-process work, and more snapshots on Instagram, and chose other tools or sites (such as websites) for professional work. Some express that being part of the group caused them to "take it [Instagram photography] more seriously," which I was assured was a good thing.

***Complexity of use: A site for complex forms of searching and discovery.*** This complexity of social media photography use is visible in this montage created from the women's artist

statements, (some have been paraphrased), to represent the various ways that the women of *Her Mind's Eye* describe their methods of employing mobile photography in community:

Looking in-between; looking above/beyond; collecting feelings, memories, or stories; searching for beauty/happiness; observing, wondering, wandering, capturing and discovering places well known and new; travelling and approaching as a visitor; being spectator to the human drama of strangers, or the actor. Creating a record or clue of one's own intimate events; finding charm in insignificant details; exploring neighbourhoods in the city and a diversity of cultures, street art, urban design and decay; experiencing and interacting with daily life and shared spaces; contemplating and contrasting moments; haunting historical buildings, parks and back alleys; and juxtaposing the common and unexpected; coming together and showing our own personal worlds to others, learning about mobile photography itself; as well as, telling stories.

Certainly, one common occurrence throughout many of the women's photographs is an ongoing pursuit for something special in the city. This "something" can come in the form of beauty, of meaning-making, of discovering a cultural artifact (such as signs of local resident's activities, historical sites, or street art), of storytelling or recollection, or in drawing out the magic and peace of nature. All of these further imbue atmosphere and meaning to urban life. Describing her SMP practice, Lisa explained, "It is more documentary. There's more of those little moments in between, and if you're talking about life in the city, it's not really pretty all the time. [...] you're looking for little bits of beauty and you can see it." In addition to identifiable urban sites and objects, through mobile photography we search for meaning, we search for ourselves including our visions, emotions and aesthetics represented throughout the city. We also search for places to spend time in, and for greater understanding of our lives and our environment.

***For sustained inquiry.*** Instagram is frequently used as a means and method for inquiring into, or questioning aspects of society, humanity, and the surrounding world. @llangset's images are coupled with captions that, while frequently cryptic and poetic, serve as guides to understanding how her photographs are representations of contemplations and questions around social and personal matters. Although not shown in her exhibition images, her curation of #loststeeple images illustrates her feelings and questions about the disappearance of religious and community

spaces in society. Sarah's consideration of homelessness and the human spirit, presented later, represent another means of inquiry into one's surroundings. Such complex explorations for meaning through visual representations of one's local environment can be seen in the photo realistic paintings of Canadian artist Mary Pratt (Whyte, 2014). Further discussions of SMP as a mode of inquiry such as a journaling space, or as a means of awareness of one's environments are also discussed in the sections to come.

***For relating: A social/meeting space of photo-community and communication.*** For the members of *Her Mind's Eye*, social media photography practice served as a beginning introduction for getting to know other group members, (and other people in general) based on visual information that conveyed how they saw, experienced, and conveyed aspects of the world both aesthetically and as simple visual representations of daily life. Individuals' photos demonstrated their styles, their interests, their sensitivity to their surroundings, and thoughtful or poetic expressions; as such, they served as small lights illuminating the path to beginning to know someone. Social media photographic communications circumvent verbal expressions, physical appearance and other characteristics that might influence our ability to get to know or to approach an individual within their normal daily life paths. According to Foster (2013), social networking sites serve as "a type of social subsidization that advances modern day informal socialization" because "social networking sites provide a jumpstart to social interaction, as well as a way to build upon that interaction in the form of social capital" (p. 152). These types of small introductions may also explain why many Canadians access local community organizations through social media (Veenhof et al., 2008).

Mobile photography, while sometimes having the characteristics of being portfolio-like or magazine-like, is at its essence social imagery. As such it tends to straddle the line between new forms of open-ended daily communication, and traditional practices such as fine arts, (popular or independent) media and design. It is a way of expressing oneself. Questions of how one expresses oneself may connect to one's individual goals, and those of the community and mobile photography networks they are part of. This was especially true for our group, as being part of *Her Mind's Eye*, made possible certain ways of direct and collaborative communicating and sharing.

***Connecting the independent self to others.*** Jodi's mobile photography practice involved socially sharing her oftentimes witty and honed everyday observations. With a background of prior artistic training and experience, Jodi came to understand Instagram as being not "about the photos" but "about coming together and showing our own personal worlds to others." Jodi's images depicted daily life, but they also displayed a clear aesthetic sense and represented Jodi's worldview and personality.

While the very identification of *Her Mind's Eye* as a community supports our intentions to connect with one another, perhaps, too, the very structure of Instagram, which requires one to create a personal "gallery," and encourages users to create visuals with accompanying written statements contributed to more confident presentations of self. This could, in turn, support validations from peers, contributing to relationships that are confident and comfortable with clear sharing of voice and thoughts. Turkle (2012) critiques social media-based relationships as weak and frequently existing solely online, however others (Baym, 2010) speak to the interconnectedness of online and offline as enabling potentially greater levels of connectedness, extended networks, and sees technologies as variations in communication tools to be applied in different social spaces. Within *Her Mind's Eye*, the capacity to share and communicate was further strengthened by visual components. The individualized/directed nature of communication on social media enabled those with bilingual abilities to perhaps more readily switch identities and languages online, and enabled those who may not regularly communicate with an individual from a different cultural or linguistic background to do so visually and through shared tags. Such capacities for intercultural communication through the visual nature of social media platforms are becoming known (Shuter, 2002).

***Emotional sharing through the visual, mobile, online nature.*** In cities where social interaction can sometimes be limited or prescribed, social media photography can be a way of expressing and sharing one's feelings and thoughts with others. While this was notable within our group, participants also emotionally connected and communicated with other individuals in the widely cast internet. In *Her Mind's Eye*, emotional sharing occurred with women located in the different cities of Montreal and Vancouver, particularly in conjunction with the #SaturdayInHerMind thematic prompts. The women shared their thoughts or feelings through numerous means: clearly spoken comments, cryptic and metaphoric photos, or images that hold stories and present

emotions which aren't easily spoken. Acknowledging that the message was noticed, responses are often equally subtle but acknowledge that difficult life experiences are noticed and cared about. Such interactions illustrated a community of care, which Thurber and Zimmerman (2002) recognize as a feature of women's pedagogical practices. Despite the tendency towards positivistic content, a wide scope of emotions can frequently be "quietly" present or can co-exist alongside a photography practice that is sociable, overall.

Contrary to her very cheerful and design-focused Instagram gallery, Marjolaine's exhibition entitled "city blues" presents the melancholy and sadness present within long Montreal winters, colouring a rich, cold blue through the city's cold, dark, and even heavy historical spaces, such as the cemetery that sits atop Mont Royal mountain. Her images simultaneously represent the moments of beauty, light and appreciation found in these melancholy spaces. She speaks to the silver lining of hope "In the depths of winter, in the heart of the cemetery, in the belly of the tunnel, the light exists – hope is here" (translated from the original French).

***Facilitating mindfulness: A happy and thankful space.*** The reason for my creating a separate category of positive emotional space, despite the preceding overarching category of emotional space, is due to the predisposition of Instagram towards positivity-oriented expressions. @Maygar\_merinue's photographs focus on joyful discoveries in daily life. Relatively new to Canada (having lived in Montreal and now Vancouver), her photographs represent her philosophy and approach to life, to "follow her heart in a relentless search for beauty and happiness in her surroundings." In a sense, her photo gallery presents a collection of beautiful memories gathered like a pocketful of glowing gemstones gathered from the ocean's edge. Her images particularly feature nature's wonders, including the landscape of the ocean and the sky from her new home in Vancouver, found hearts in urban graffiti, and late autumn dried hydrangea skeletons glowing in morning light. These images, with their memories and magic, contribute to her joy in daily life, as she gets to know and love her city-home. In her artist statement, she describes "Photography and mobile photography as a creative outlet and a way to connect, share stories, and add a smile."

Within *Her Mind's Eye*, social media photography was often intentionally applied towards goals of mental positivity, and an expression of appreciation for qualities of one's surroundings. SMP was frequently used as a means of focusing on and recording cheerful

thoughts and events, as can be seen in the popular movement and tag, #100daysofhappy, which was used by some group members. This tendency towards beauty and cheerful representations, and the frequent omission of negative or ugly content was questioned several times by some members of the group, and Marie-France challenged us with it in our weekly theme, by inviting us to try creating an ugly photo. Even with this permission and encouragement to portray the less lovely spaces of our city, images and associated comments with a clearly negative emotional affect were difficult to find, and several contributions such as @Hannah\_nutwood's self-portrait of herself modeling a funny wig, incorporated humor, which had a mitigating effect.

Although it may inhibit our capacities to address problems in our cities through SMPC photographic records, perhaps there is good reason for this positivity in social spaces, and for applying thankfulness as a daily outlook. Also, a healthy community with good relationships is in itself the grounds for sharing and addressing personal and regional matters of importance, (Hezul, 2005) which might be done later offline or within private spaces.

***For journaling: Collecting moments, and memories of observation.*** Just as the preceding example demonstrated how Instagram can serve as a space for the collection of happy and beautiful memories, it is similarly used by others to collect memories in general, and record moments of interest. Photographic 'observations' of daily life show a series of moments, frequently amusing or odd, such as @Joyjoyjodi's image of a cross drawn above a hand drier, as well as intimate and emotional, like her portraits of her cat. The personal nature of the women's observations became a collection of selected memories from their lives.

In @Hannah\_nutwood's artist statement, she presents herself as "not a photographer" but as a homebody who loves the simple things, like warm blankets, "cuddling her husband, or her cat, and knitting." Her photographs frequently show dreamy, fairytale-like scenes or beautiful/magical occurrences discovered in the course of her daily life. In her artist statement, @Hannah\_nutwood describes her purpose: "She takes a picture to feel to remember: a mood, a color, a time, a place. She collects these things like a magpie collects shiny objects." It goes on to explain how she looks for nature (and to the sky) in the city, rather than at cars, buildings or people whom can cause discomfort.

***Intersectional in nature: Self in personal/public and virtual/physical spaces/places.*** Many of us came to *Her Mind's Eye* with a desire to bring together our photographic ways of knowing/seeing and communicating with our desire to create new relationships and develop technical learning. In her artist statement, @Llangset says, “Cities become places by connecting people,” thus speaking to the complexity and interconnected nature of the urban, and individual private space frequently found in our photos. Art is simultaneously about identity and connection” she adds that through social media photography and Instagram, something that is public and anonymous is also personal and intimate. “There is a duality, a revelation of the environment as it is experienced, and of oneself (in her mind’s eye). There is a tension between the desire to speak the truth and the desire to please.” @MorningMango describes images as “the first paragraph to a story. Or the second, or the third.” My own artist statement speaks to social media photography as being a means of navigating the complexities of city living and community, particularly given the continuous mobility and perhaps lack of stable resources with which to build, keep, and influence our surroundings.

***For awareness of one’s environment, and shared/collective awareness.*** Perhaps the most notable and agreed upon use of *Her Mind's Eye* by the women in the group was that it served as a space for being present and grounded in one’s surroundings. Many of the women expressed greater awareness of the details of one’s city, neighbourhood, and change to environmental conditions. Making a close connection with surrounding details big and small in the everyday environment led to greater relationship to place, and appreciation for place. Joanna had been on Instagram previously, and described in our focus group how being part of *Her Mind's Eye* altered how she interacted with her physical environment, even adding purpose to her daily life, as it caused her to slow down and be more attentive to her daily environment. She explained that her experience of routinely walking a certain path changed. (The two quotes to follow incorporate quotes and paraphrase to make the spoken conversational dialogue easier to follow in writing.) Joanna explains: It made me stop a little bit more. She used to march there and back, but now as she returned home she would look around and think, oh, I missed that and I missed that. So then she would stop, and, [deep breath in and out], ask, “Okay, what is around me? Is there anything? What’s going on around me?”

Haley also explained that being part of *Her Mind's Eye* helped provide her with an appreciation of the urban environment, because sometimes in the winter, it's pretty difficult to appreciate, though not always. *Her Mind's Eye* had her looking for things to appreciate, and the most important was having that community, a place to share her discoveries. Ansel Adams is attributed as having said, "When words become unclear, I shall focus with photographs," which speaks to how photography can inspire awareness of the details in one's surroundings. This resonates with Dewey's (1934) notion of art as an everyday experience. Going back in Art Education history to 1897, Stankiewicz (2001) found recommendations that "support for seeing and creating beauty should permeate art teaching" (p. 28). Eisner (1973) states, "The ability to perceive is a learned ability. We are not born with 'sight,' we acquire it through experience and through trial and error: to see something is to have intellectually constructed a perceptual realization" (p. 91). More recently, Lalonde and Castro (2015) observed a connection between SMPC practice and the aesthetics of everyday life; they say "to create anything, is to create yourself," (1999).

The awareness and greater relationship to one's environment that many experienced points to the capacity for SMPC engagement and practice to connect individuals with their environments, through an active, shared awareness of local place and everyday changes. In this way, SMPC practices may help individuals to fully experience daily life and one's environment as they help them to stay connected to, open, observant, and to, thus giving greater meaning, a desire that lies at the heart of every human being, and of art as well.

***Mobile photography and SMPC engagement as a way of life.*** Mobile photography practice has been approached to differing degrees of intensity and personal importance within *Her Mind's Eye*. For some, it served as a past time – a hobby that was engaged with in a variety of ways (presented above) at specific times for specific purpose. However social media photography and SMPC involvement is used by others as a daily feature used to engage with urban life through a photographic process of searching, inquiring, reflecting, composing, sharing and exploring the representations and interpretations of others. I describe this as living social mobile photography.

To those who are less familiar with lifestyles where mobile users are continuously engaged with their devices, it might seem that describing social media photography practice as a way of life might be a stretch. Indeed, this very idea of users being *highly engaged with their*

*devices* can right away bring up all sorts of negative perceptions of technology overuse in society that are prevalent in the media (Turkle, 2011). It is reminiscent of popular social representations of technologies as deterministic, causing harm to individuals, rather than as socially constructed tools that are created, modified, taken up, and set down by individuals in order to meet their existing communication needs (Baym, 2010).

I would like to consider then that SMP can be a positive tool used in one's life, like journaling, meditation, and other reflective practices which foster awareness of self and environment. As Joanna mentioned, through SMPC practice within our group, she had come to slow herself down as she moved through space, observing the changes to her environment, and making interesting discoveries. In an online chat, Hind (@vistavista) said that the most interesting part of the group was how in engaging with everyday life, everyone saw the same thing differently. In this sense, photography served as a tool for making these ways of seeing, engaging, and managing life more tangible.

In a living social mobile photography practice which was participated in to different degrees by many group members, an individual is active on Instagram checking and responding to photographs posted by individuals in one's network daily and throughout the day (in the morning, evening, and at break times), continuously observing and representing one's environment through her own vision and towards her own purposes. Ito et al. (2008) describe such practices as always-on communication, drawing from Baron's (2008) study of online language. While many group members could relate, others might not see themselves as participating with such a highly engaged level of use, or in an ongoing manner. One might do so at certain times in her life, when the conditions are right (such as having a healthy SMP and other factors that make one feel compelled to share).

The very physical acts connected to SMP – of exploring the city on foot (referred to popularly as #walkingthecity), which involves intentionally, physically searching one's environment for meaning and/or aesthetic possibilities; and collecting photographic thoughts and insights into oneself, one's culture, and surroundings, serves as a method for living in and engaging with the city. In addition to being a mode of inquiring into the everyday environment, a living SMP practice can also be therapeutic, helping us to consciously focus our minds on those things which we see as worthy of attention, and to intentionally create meaning and feel connected (through visual imagery and focused experience) to that which is around us.

Through photography, we are often able come to understand the meaning; feelings and defining factors of the places we inhabit. We also create and contribute to the identity of these places both for ourselves and for those others who engage with our creations and expressions (Lippard, 1990). We are further able to personalize a space, or define and focus on a feature that is important to us.

Our mobile photographic practices can be used as a support for our ways of engaging with life, while also providing another avenue for sharing our thoughts and way of experiencing life beyond our own minds and encounters (as we search for and consider the representations of others), and beyond the reach of our physical communities and connections. In sharing these thoughts, we can participate in a collective consciousness, forming our understanding and incorporating our visions into constructing the culture of the spaces/places that surround us. Conversely, through engaging with others' photographs, we are further able to question our own ways of seeing and doing, sometimes encouraging ourselves to look more closely at things, and challenging how we engage with our surroundings.

***A note about group composition, limitations, voice, and going deeper into SMPC.*** In our focus group, several reasons provided for why women joined *Her Mind's Eye* included a desire to explore and represent their lived urban experience, interest in urban studies, a desire to learn how to use social media, photography technologies, and to be a part of community and meet new people. I believe that part of the reason why our community was able to support many different representations of voice was the diversity of women present within a relatively small population size and the women's initial agreement and interest in expressing and exploring their daily, lived urban experiences.

Not all women's SMPCs (formal or otherwise) look the same. Tiidenberg's (2015) study of pregnant Russian-speaking women's photographs revealed heteronormative representations of femininity, where the images, along with "the captions and comments [...] reinforce the ideals of the devoted Russian mother/wife" (p. 1750). Alternatively Olszanowski (2014) describes an anonymous community of women who utilize a variety of tactics to circumvent Instagram's censorship in order to engage in what she terms feminist self-imaging practices. I wonder whether or not the women of or Magdalena's study would have responded to a research call such as for *Her Mind's Eye* and if so, how these women might represent themselves within the

environment of our group. In *Her Mind's Eye*, the design of the group itself, perhaps alongside the effects of like-person networking, likely brought together women who already recognized and identified with certain shared values, such as the value of women's unique experiences and voices, a value recognized as feminist in origin. Many of the women came to the group out of interest in examining their urban environments, being actively part of creative community, and experimenting in new visual media forms in collaboration with other women.

As a group, we strove to investigate more deeply SMP mobile photography through our collective efforts. At times when perhaps posts became less frequent, less thoughtful/expressive or more simplified, as a facilitator I would present a critical question online or in person that encouraged group members to go further into their photographic explorations. More often than not, critical questions came out of the group itself, were used as prompts, asked and developed as part of #SaturdayInHerMind. If a thematic prompt required more nuanced or detailed introduction, or if there was a sense of something missing from our collective depictions, it was often raised by one of the group members and discussed in person during group meetings. For instance, the women identified the initial stereotypical mobile photography theme of "selfie" as popular and clichéd, in the very moments it was proposed as a # SaturdayInHerMind theme! In short order, the women began investigating the meaning of a "selfie," discussing who does/doesn't take selfies (we decided that young women take more selfies, in case you're curious), questioning how we each present ourselves, and acknowledging the value of every woman introducing herself, alongside the multiple possibilities for what a selfie could be.

Similarly, the group had a good laugh about creating a cat tag #hermindseyecats, but acknowledged that despite the stereotypical nature, for many, cats held important personal roles as companions, and constituted relationships that are filled with life experience and emotions, similar to how human relationships are. Also, photos of cats undeniably brought joy, amusement, and were a point of connection for many. At the same time, the stereotype of Instagram photographs of lattes and cafés also served an emotionally uplifting purpose, allowing one to perform and record enjoyable and aesthetically delicious moments of daily life, as well as enabling a sharing of spaces of comfort, creating a 'guide' to the city. In celebrating our third spaces, Oldenburg (1989) points to coffee shops as uplifting third spaces, sites for comfort, acceptance; such a memory can be held within a latte. A critical reading by Luke (2006) would suggest rather that it is the performance of identity, as the flâneur becomes the phoneur, using

mobile technologies as a means of “registering voice, albeit within the confines of consumption” (p.21), drawing upon Kelly (1997) who states, “desire and difference intersect in identity” (p.105).

While through *Her Mind's Eye* we are able to see what images the women chose to represent and read their explanations, it is more difficult to determine if each woman felt free to share everything she wanted to, and also to know which images are absent. For example, a photograph of an empty hospital corridor is a sort of outlier, in its personal, somewhat concerning nature that causes one to question. Such an image making us realize the gamut of life experiences that are hidden from Instagram's many eyes. Turkle (2012) implores us to consider what deeper forms of communication are lost due to technologically-mediated communications. In the positive environment of Facebook, which akin to Instagram, allows only instantaneous positive feedback in the forms of likes and hearts. How might a need to perform limit what we feel able to talk about? Might face-to-face critical group discussion counter this effect? *Her Mind's Eye* seems to point to “yes.” The question of “how much?” remains. Gardner and Davis (2013) propose a duality of app-disabling and app-enabling practices, which is useful for considering creative and social development through social media applications. *Her Mind's Eye* points to the possibility of what Gardner and Davis term app-enabling practices, or social media practices and tools that foster creativity, promote deep relationships and support strong identity development.

***Participation as direction.*** While communication that took place within the social media sites of Instagram and Facebook may have been influenced by social pressures, and perhaps even the features of social media applications that structure communication in ways both beneficial and limiting to social interactions (Gough, Harte & Jackson, 2014) the social bonds and communication methods of the community were itself very powerful. This was particularly true for us as women, communicating and meeting together. In *Her Mind's Eye*, we experienced participation as direction, whereby, through participating in a topic, group members made it bigger, while by not engaging with a theme caused it to disappear or become quieter. This connects with ideas of group social knowledge formation, cultural flows (Appadurai, 1996), and flows of innovation (Sylvan, 2006), which Nelson, Marple and Hull (2015) applied in their work, developing and studying social media networks that incorporated photographs, videos, and more, as sites for youths' collaborative knowledge creation.

**Limiting factors.** Examples of factors that caused participants to restrict free expression within *Her Mind's Eye*, and which influenced our decision not to be continuously open and recruiting group members included safety, identifiability, and some described, feeling and social pressure on Instagram overall to post beautiful imagery. Additional possible limiting factors include identity revelation, social controls and communication-controlling features present within the structure and policy statements of Instagram itself (Olszanowski, 2014). Do these limitations need to be addressed, or are these social structures and limitations representative of reasonable or useful social controls for a given environment, that are then set aside in favor of alternate tools, forms of communication, and spaces as we require new tools to help us in realizing our objectives? Baym (2010) explains, “There are circumstances in which mediated interaction is preferable to face to face interaction, circumstances in which it is worse, and others when it’s interchangeable” (p. 153).

**Absent images, experiences and silences.** Returning once again to this topic, and considering the themes that didn't emerge, or were hidden within group member's social media photography practices, I am left with the question, how does social media photography not serve as an appropriate site and means for addressing societal problems online? *Her Mind's Eye* members used nuanced, cryptic, soulful, and optimistic structures to share information that wasn't emotionally uplifting or celebratory. Most focused conversations about complex topics occurred in online spaces that provided degrees of privacy (like Facebook), and even more so, in person. Personal matters were discussed most frequently in direct, person-to-person communications both on and offline. Private information was almost always discussed only in person.

### **Conclusion**

By exploring mobile photography practices in urban communities, our collective and independent photographs point to significant places and features within the urban environment. Our photos demonstrate our love of cultural sites, natural sites, transit, our homes, and spaces that are highly accessible to women and supportive of work and creative activities. Thus, *Her Mind's Eye* demonstrates the capacity of expressive arts to help reveal lived experiences, point towards urban ideals for women, and the collective voicing of such lived and felt experiences. On and offline

social media photography practices are a means for women to distribute media content that speaks to their values and needs in urban spaces, hopefully leading also to social and local influence. The types of photographs she shares might depict her interactions within various sites, her valuing of certain types of spaces in the city, and her desires for urban spaces that will meet her needs, due to the frequently evocative medium of mobile photography (Hart, 2013.)

The most apparent means in which social media photography was described by participants as influential to their well being, was both through its capacity to encourage presence, seeing and searching for sites of appreciation within one's urban environment, and in an associated action, the sharing of these moments of appreciation with others. Creative, aesthetic, and observant engagement with one's surroundings was then shared within community, which then enabled others to see and appreciate their city in different ways, and led to an ongoing cycle of observation, sharing, and appreciation.

## CHAPTER 14. The practices and features of *Her Mind's Eye*:

### Organizing an SMPC for women in urban settings

#### *Introduction*

How can a creative learning community be designed to meet the needs of urban women? In a collaborative environment, how can a teacher lead well, without being a teacher? How about having a class without a room, but with the city, internet, and mobile devices at our fingertips? What types of core philosophies and conditions might bring about such questions, and what can be learned as they are lived out? In this chapter I offer a reflective account of “looking back to look ahead” seeking to address these issues as it investigates the construction of *Her Mind's Eye* and the foundational philosophies of SMPC facilitation and leadership. It highlights actions that took place in planning and co-creating spaces and activities.

In describing analysis of research that engages with everyday life, Brinkmann (2012) emphasizes that it should help *make action possible*. Indeed, action-enabling findings are particularly useful for research that examines new practitioner and creative production models. Herein lies the goal, as this chapter speaks primarily to the question of how to create and facilitate a social media photography community for urban woman. This thesis aligns with Brinkmann's (2012) recommendation that action research analysis “has quality when it enables one to understand and to act,” which I hope the presentation of this account, with analysis of the actions taken, factors and conditions that emerged, and their results, will enable (p.181).

#### *Drawing on the collaborative inquiry model*

Schnellert and Butler's (2014) overview of the successful conditions required to facilitate group research and learning, which they term *collaborative inquiry*, can be applied to the process and the aspects of making and managing *Her Mind's Eye*. The conditions for *collaborative inquiry* paralleled those I had sought to foster throughout *Her Mind's Eye*; for example, the presence of an *ethics of care* (Nodding, 2012), a relational foundation, and *sense of community* (Hezul, 2005; Fisher, Sonn & Bishop, 2002), present within the category of social/emotional supports. These categories of features and conditions that enable *collaborative inquiry* are, “structural supports; cultural and social/emotional supports; learning and process supports” and “ownership/agency” (Schnellert & Butler, 2014, p. 43). *Structural supports* refer to conditions such as access to gathering spaces and to other participants (i.e. group members and group meetings), and having

time to investigate. In *Her Mind's Eye*, members were accessible and available to meet in online and off-line communication spaces. *Cultural and social/emotional supports* are developed by “creating a learning context in which members feel valued and comfortable engaging in inquiry together” in which “a culture of trust, where all participants are valued for their strengths and potential, is essential” (Schnellert and Butler, p. 43). This again speaks to the *sense of community* and *ethics of care*. The third feature, *ownership and agency*, is similarly intersectional; it represents a way of approaching community management and philosophies of learning. Below, I highlight how ownership and agency is central to voice, and our techniques for facilitating free expression. *Learning and process supports* describes learning tools/resources and inquiry methods. In *Her Mind's Eye* these included theme topics, group members’ person-to-person knowledge sharing, postings of resource links on Facebook, and in-person facilitator guidance. This overarching map for understanding the development and management of *Her Mind's Eye* is a modified version of Schnellert and Butler’s map illustrating the structure of conditions supporting *collaborative inquiry*. I have modified their diagram to include definitions and examples of social/mobile photography community development experienced in *Her Mind's Eye*. This map of collaborative inquiry demonstrates how the tools, such as digital spaces, actions and philosophies, influenced and intersected one another.

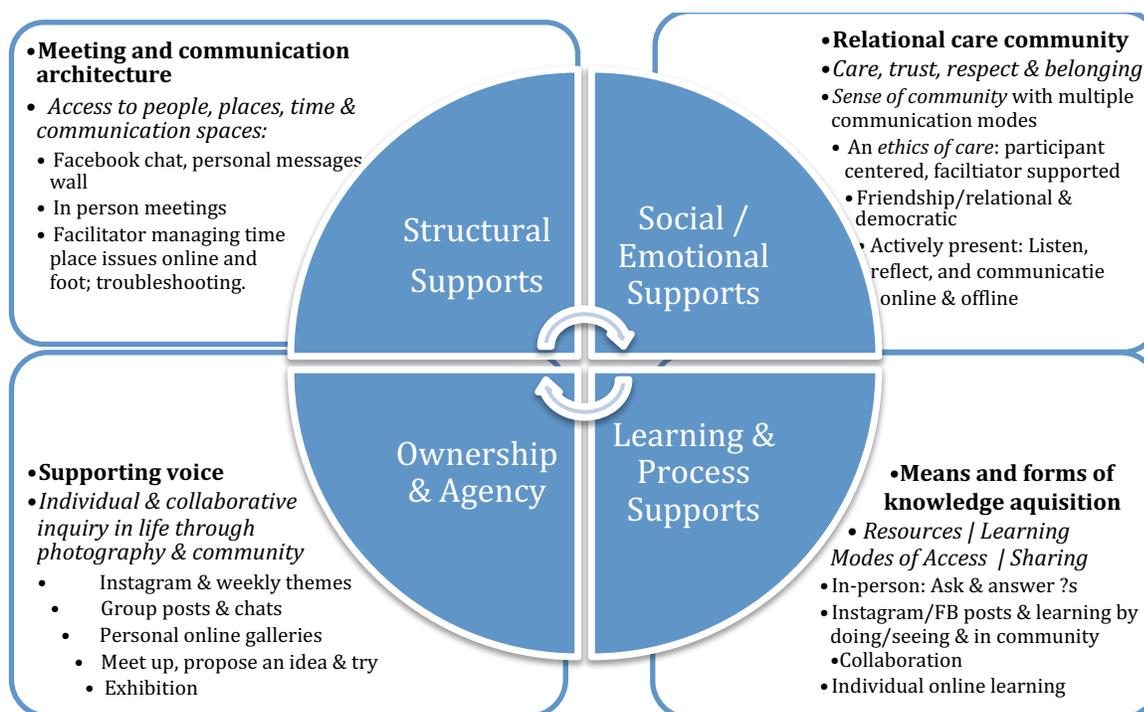


Figure 104. Collaborative inquiry map for *Her Mind's Eye* based on Schnellert and Butler (2014).

### ***Overlap between categories and connecting Chapter 13***

Since collaborative inquiry is a model representing the interconnected features needed for a group of individuals to successfully explore an issue collectively, these categories, though each unique, necessitate being interrelated and interdependent. Two categories in particular are most visibly connected to their counterparts. They are *ownership, agency and voice*, and the modes of sharing which are present within *learning and process supports*.

*Ownership and agency* speaks to the ways in which voice is supported within collaborative inquiry. The presence of *agency, ownership and voice* resonates throughout the overview of *her photographs, her urban sites and her ways of using SMP/Cs* in chapter 13. Similarly, the chapter illustrates ways in which SMP/Cs served to support *learning and process supports* by demonstrating the process of independent and shared inquiry through photography and collectively developed focus areas. Chapter 13 also describes ways in which knowledge was accumulated and acquired, in the urban environment through SMP/C practice.

### ***Ownership and agency: Equality, reduced hierarchy and voice***

*Her Mind's Eye* was most dynamic in my view, when a shared vision of ownership was present, and collective understanding flourished and unfolded. When ownership/agency was highly prevalent, the greatest results to sustained inquiry were achieved. This condition is present when those inquiring “had a voice in all aspects of the inquiry process, from conceptualizing problems” to selecting resources, and exploring “new ideas in practice” (Schnellert and Butler, 2014, p. 44). Therefore, equality and voice is also integrated throughout the other categories to follow. It is present where structures and sites support group members’ access to community and expressivity. It can be found within the description of *social emotional supports*, where the relational atmosphere (complete with care, presence, friendship and belonging) supported voice. Similarly, the *learning supports* manifest agency in their enabling of both individual and collective inquiry.

There are two significant outcomes in which a sense of ownership and agency were realized. First, through social media photography creativity, inquiry and communication, and second, in the development of the social media photography community, *Her Mind's Eye*. This first realizations of voice involved photographic inquiry into the urban (i.e. *conceptualizing problems*) and the exploration of new ideas in social/mobile photographic practice. Social media photography was both a collaborative and independent form of inquiry that supported complex

realizations of voice. The ways in which *voice* was expressed in this study and the representations of specific urban issues, and the ways in which the women of *Her Mind's Eye* used social media photography to explore ideas in individual and collective practices, are reviewed in detail in chapter 13.

*Her Mind's Eye* members' engagement is represented by their having created over one thousand photographs in this study. Despite the contributions that SMP community had upon ownership, agency, and voice, there may also be ways in which being part of an organized community could potentially limit expressivity, due to participant expectations around the types or quality of images represented, or limitations imposed by the focus topic. In our review of how participation in our community influenced the women's mobile photography practices, one woman said "it's funny that when the group started I started taking less pictures than I used to" although those she took were carefully thought out conceptually and aesthetically. This could possibly indicate a beneficial development in one's practice, representing professionalism in the curating or selecting of one's images.

The features of equality or reduced hierarchy, and creative freedom were similarly important to our establishment of a happy, caring community. Within the social media spaces and when meeting in person, individuals leaned towards equality and recognition of equality, wherein everyone present was encouraged to speak and take-on responsibilities, regardless of one's social status or career skills.

***Social/emotional supports: Ethics of care and sense of community***

Social/emotional characteristics of *Her Mind's Eye* were central to our functionality as enquirers, creators and a community of women. *Her Mind's Eye* was a space for our building of relationships and became a *caring community*, (Nodding, 2012), leading to the development of our collective *sense of community* (Fisher, Sonn & Bishop, 2002). Beyond all other research and education goals, the need for a caring safe and democratic space was central to our capacity for communication, and the very existence of our group across virtual and physical spaces. The social/emotional characteristics discussed here are: friendship, relationship, becoming and an ethics of care, and, a sense of community.

***Friendship, relationship, becoming, and an ethics of care.*** Our emerging friendship and the caring community of *Her Mind's Eye* were vital to our collective learning, creating, and inquiring. As a community of women, we grew together, sharing aspects of our lives and struggles, and questioning complex topics seen within our weekly themes. There were times when greater critical or introspective communication took place, times when some voices were absent, and yet other times when popular and straightforward photographs and social media interactions occurred. These sharing moments occurred in “bite sized” comments of communication across social media platforms (not easily be seen by outsiders), and our regular in-person meetings that built up to relational knowing.

Through all of these stages and ways of engaging, we came to know each other more, and the personality and definition of our collective was negotiated. In this way, the friendship-basis of *Her Mind's Eye* assisted us in self-exploration, soul searching, and observation of our position within our surroundings. The concept of *becoming* is useful for adults engaged in the process of learning and engaging new communities and professional skill development. According to Irwin (2013), becoming involves “lingering in this evolving space of possibility, recognizing that one never ‘becomes’ but rather resides in a constant state of becoming” (p. 203). Further adding to the discussion of identity as it occurs in new media learning communities, Carlos-Castro (2015) explains that, “the kind of identity development undertaken as a result of participating in a professional new media arts production team initiates a strong sense of self that is connected to a larger scope of various forms of community” (p. 117).

An *ethics of care* (Nodding, 2012) is expressed in communities where care is of greater importance than authority (Thurber & Zimmerman, 2002). For myself as a facilitator, an ethics of caring for the community meant watching and listening to group dynamics as well as reflecting upon my own actions and communications (i.e. as leader I became facilitator), and noticing how they were understood and responded to. This reflexive process pushed me further towards a democratic and relational approach to group management.

***A sense of community.*** In developing the *Her Mind's Eye* community, building a positive *sense of community* both online and off-line was *essential*. Its significance far exceeded that of other group features, including our activity decisions, focus areas for teaching/learning/sharing, and even the choice of social media spaces. Fisher, Sonn and Bishop (2002) use the term a *sense of*

*community* to describe the atmosphere that forms when individuals identify with a place or group of people, or in other words, where they feel attachment to others in their community, and a sense of belonging. Caring features which supported a sense of community and fostered a feeling of belonging involved: highlighting the voice and decision making of the members by the group, maintaining a flexible community structure that allowed for diverse forms of participation, and in-person meetings which enabled us to get to know one another more fully and to form relationships. Hezul (2005) similarly identified the key characteristic of *sense of community* as a necessary precursor when art education is to be a means of community development, because through members' belonging, a space is fostered that enables the realization of social transformation and social justice goals.

Aspects which could cause the *sense of community* to falter included unexplained reduced participation by several members in online or offline environments, an unsustainable group (perhaps as was experienced by the small size of the Vancouver group), and other such limitations. For these reasons, a significant amount of time and effort was applied towards fostering an open atmosphere of inclusion, group member input and encouragement for participation. Stringer recognizes the centrality of a *sense of community* to action research. He notes that action research has “both practical and theoretical outcomes [...] in ways that provide conditions for continuing action – the formation of a sense of community” (p. xvi).

### ***Learning and process supports***

*Learning and process* supports, according to Schnellert and Butler (2014), are the multiple forms of resources accessible to participants to aid them in their process of engaging with the overall structure of the project, and that supported learning. In *Her Mind's Eye*, these learning supports looked like sights of communication: photos as a way of inquiry (see Ch. 13), knowledge being exchanged in person through informal chats and online through knowledge sharing hashtag projects, and posting links and other information to our Facebook group. Examples of the learning supports, or, the processes and means by which the women of *Her Mind's Eye* accessed and shared resources, especially those specific to SMP are described in chapter 13, under *Her ways of practicing social media photography and SMP community*. I also discuss learning processes enabled by the architecture and tools employed by our community under *structural supports*.

***Collaborative, multi-modal learning across platforms embedded in daily life.*** One of the most important things learned in *Her Mind's Eye* was the ability to operate creatively and collectively. When the women of *Her Mind's Eye* gathered together, in my estimation our collective capacity for imagining possibilities for exhibiting, and distributing our photos and media abounded. This was particularly true following our first exhibition, when ideas ranged from future exhibitions, to publishing a book, and creating a booth at a prominent local culture, art, and craft fair. While some of these ideas have yet to be realized, two new exhibitions were planned by group members, not long after our first exhibition. Examples include our plan to create weekly photographic themes for exploration, and in the latter part of the study, ideas around the sharing of group management/facilitation responsibilities. More than this, through our experience of being present throughout each others' daily lives (co-presence, Licoppe, 2004) and ongoing exchange of our thoughts and multi-modal ways of knowing (social, locational, experiential, temporal, etc.) *Her Mind's Eye* developed a form of networked knowing, or *collective intelligence* that contributed to our awareness of life and our urban environments. According to Lévy (1997), intelligent communities,

...permanently negotiate the order of things, language, the role of the individual, the identification and definition of objects, the reinterpretation of memory. [...] Yet, this does not result in a state of disorder [...] for individual acts are coordinated and evaluated in real time, according to a large number of criteria that are themselves constantly reevaluated in context. (Lévy, 1997, p. 17)

Our SMPC provided the structure for multiple sites and styles of creative, collaborative, and self-expression, in both social media spaces and traditional artistic venues. Our imagining-in-planning was also applied to the management and learning/creative inquiry of our community. In so doing, it gave group members ownership and agency (Schnellert and Butler, 2014) over their creative style and community. Within such situated learning art communities, "connecting individual and collaborative artmaking supports learning," and "collaborative interactions result in the establishment of group codes of behavior" (Freedman, Heijnen, Kallio-Tavin, Kárpáti & Papp, 2013, p. 114). For us, these were more norms of practice, although such codes might include our atmosphere of care. At the end of the group the biggest discovery regarding our capacity to learn

was our need to identify our own assets and those of others, and to be willing to share our skills and take initiative to ask for help in developing our skills in a particular area.

***Learning about community by being present in community.*** Through participation in co-constructing community, the women learned how to design and maintain *Her Mind's Eye*, and participate in cultural collaborations within local community such as approaching and negotiating with local institutions. We practiced acting *in* and *with* community using our combined assets, in locating community spaces for our group to meet in (i.e. cafés), for photowalks and the exhibition. We each drew upon a combination of *my contacts*, *your community experience*, and *our eyes, ears* and *local knowledge* in planning activities in our urban neighbourhoods. The benefit was mutual; when we had a meeting space, a University café had a sizeable group of patrons on a Saturday morning, and a local bookstore benefitted from our renting and promoting their newly developed exhibition space and drawing in customers. Graham (2007) upholds critical place-based pedagogies in art education as a means to return to “the local [which] is marginalized in favour of large-scale economies of consumption,” as locally-engaged art practices can support the establishment of practices “fostering social and ecological justice” (Graham, 2007, p. 375).

***Developing/exchanging locational knowledge in cities.*** By participating in location-based social media photography community, we have the opportunity to share locational knowledge. But how much did *Her Mind's Eye* members share their experiences of, and movement in cities? One feature of locational knowledge that emerged was a more developed understanding of the layered meanings of places as Lippard (1998) explores, brought about by the capacity to see one's environment more thoroughly through another's eyes, heart and mind. Mobile photography community practices promoted greater sensitivity and awareness of our everyday surroundings, training the eye to be more perceptive and observant.

Locational knowledge was shared both on social media sites and in person. The most commonly identified urban spaces on Instagram were public sites, like coffee shops, major institutions, schools, transit, and other spaces existing outside of one's personal/private radius. Most (if not all) of the women in the group chose not to include locational data in their photographs, i.e. GPS coordinates for reasons of safety and privacy, however sites could be found by the name of a store, or the location could be share upon request. While some locations were

kept secret in order to preserve them, and might be told or shown only in person, others such as a cozy café would be featured as both a personal record and a recommendation for the group. To maintain privacy, sites in one's personal zone, i.e. in or around one's home, would frequently (though not always) be taken as close ups, in part to limit revelations of precise personal locational information.

***Learning through exhibiting.*** The exhibition was an important site for prompting individual advances in thoughtful/critical engagement with photographs, as was required for the selection of images and the development of an artist statement. Through the exhibition we focused our topic and considered our purposes, and were confronted with our decisions due to their being publicly shared. The importance of formal display and public representation heightened the group's excitement, and intensified our sense of collectivity and our united purpose offline, as we engaged in the processes necessary to physically produce the show. Berghoff, Borgmann and Parr (2005) describe the exhibition as an “aesthetic experience in and of itself” in which different perspectives are “synthesized [...] into a bigger picture” (p. 103). The exhibition also made the results of our collective voice and personal inquiries present within the very city it spoke to (for Montrealers), while Vancouver members participated in a across-nation representation of Canadian urban women's visions and experiences.

***Learning support summary reflection.*** In *Her Mind's Eye*, knowledge was often collaboratively developed through discussion and communication between members. Some members commented the view that their photographic skill had improved, while many stated a huge growth in their social media capabilities and their capacity to participate in mobile photography communities online. Especially telling was a moment in our focus group when the group considered what they had learned through *Her Mind's Eye*. As the list grew, some who hadn't previously recognized “learning” as taking place within this social creative community experienced a small moment of awakening. Freedman et al. (2013) note that fun and sociality are characteristics of online art communities. This enjoyable cycling between creating and defining the process collaboratively through explorative iterations within community, is distilled in the phrase, “Artmaking can promote social networking, which reinforces art making” (Freedman et al., p. 113)

***Structural supports: Meeting and communication architecture***

In addition to the social/emotional supports and the presence of ownership and agency that formed the foundation through which *Her Mind's Eye* was able to collaborate and create, so too structures/spaces were needed where actions and communications could take place. *Structural supports* explored the places where we met virtually and physically, aggregated content (a meeting of media!) and where across these sites, we enjoyed numerous forms of communication. Overlapping with the aforementioned *learning and process supports*, so too, additional descriptions of how these sites were used by participants in practice is in chapter 13, under the heading *Her ways of practicing social media photography and SMP community*. Chapter 13 discusses *structural supports* by looking at how the SMPC *Her Mind's Eye* created virtual and physical spaces for our group collectively that connected to women's individual social media accounts. It described how our SMPC functioned as space in-between, to connect locally, socially, and participate in the fun of being part of something open to definition. Here, I explain realizations made about the architecture, i.e., the spaces and tools through which *Her Mind's Eye* operated, including Facebook, Instagram, in-person meetings, and the role of the SMPC facilitator (with her tasks and competences).

***The architecture: Instagram, Facebook, and meeting face-to-face.*** The multiple sites of *Her Mind's Eye* online and on the ground were complementary when used in conjunction, though a weakness was identified in the capacity for mixed sites to maintain a sense of community when individuals participated more in one space over another. This occasionally resulted in a partial understanding of the collective knowledge developing in what was the emerging group of *Her Mind's Eye*, i.e., collective goals, missed learning opportunities, participant knowledge sharing, and less visibility in the group overall. To complicate matters, flexible sites were essential to making on accessible community, an important factor in accessibility for all group members, that characterized agency and the adaptable creative, learning, and research space of *Her Mind's Eye*. For many women, these multiple modes of engagement enabled continued participation in the group.

***Focus on Instagram.*** While the ways in which Instagram and Facebook served as structural supports for collaborative and independent inquiry are addressed in chapter 13, here I look at

Instagram from my perspective as practitioner/facilitator. Instagram can both assist creative expression and skill development, and it can be used thoughtlessly as a popular tool; Gardner and Davis (2013) term these app-enabling and app-disabling characteristics. Beneficial characteristics of Instagram include that it is immediate, accessible, and in the moment. In *Her Mind's Eye* many different uses and aesthetic approaches were visible, and it served as a suitable learning medium for technical aesthetic, and environmental/everyday inquiry medium.

Some benefits we experienced using Instagram as a site for learning, creativity, and community building included its immediacy, accessibility and visual communication capacity, intimacy (Palmer, 2012), and ability to organize and distribute information (and images) in multiple ways and spaces. Instagram enabled an instantaneously accessible shared space, whereby participants could come anytime to a virtual networked place, and could quickly access recent content from all *Her Mind's Eye* group members. Next, Instagram facilitates intimacy and accessibility to one another through its support of quickly shared content, enabling instantaneous visual mobile communication, resulting in what Licoppe (2004) describes as mediated presence or virtual ever presence. In other words, Instagram helped us to regionally locate each other's experiences and connect this knowledge to particular places in time. We often experienced these simultaneously from wherever and whenever, including across time zones, or with a delay, much like a story recounted a few hours after the fact.) This made it possible for group members in Montreal and Vancouver to feel closer to one another, to exchange experiences and communicate *live*. Furthermore, the nature of instantaneous photographs, that can communicate onsite across space and at the same time, creates new possibilities for applications of visual media and art in communication and collaborative process development.

There was a financial concern around Instagram as a site for collaborative inquiry., While it appears initially to be free, it required a notable initial and ongoing financial investment for maintaining a personal mobile device in order to upload photographs and participate smoothly and fully in community interactions. Financial implications limited some would-be members from participating in *Her Mind's Eye*, and led to initial struggles for several members who began without personal ownership of a smartphone which were circumvented by some group members in creative ways that provided them with less of a co-present experience. Instagram can also lead to a large time investment for serious users; it can impact productivity both positively and negatively, and lastly, it contains issues around account vulnerability – both the ownership and

use of group members' images, and of their social network as well. Pahwa (2013) identifies Instagram as useful for the development of spatial intelligence and supportive of visual mental processing of information, such as maps, photographs, etc.. Pahwa argues that Instagram supports intrapersonal intelligence and learning photography fundamentals quickly and simply, and the photos shared represent individuals' desires and motivations.

***Focus on Facebook.*** Facebook was the site for casual chats and written conversation, posting digital resources, and sharing factual and organizational information. It was where negotiations of our *learning supports*, i.e., ways of operating, and planning of group meeting, and of exhibitions occurred. On Facebook, I could ask for a *status-check* from the group or an individual to see if all was well.

It is difficult, perhaps even impossible to identify what was lost or absent from these conversations that might have been present, for example: had the medium enabled longer responses, or in face to face conversations. Facebook served as a structural support for talking, by enabling some thoughtful collective inquiry processes (described earlier under *learning supports*) within everyday life and across cultures and physical places. Ideas present in photos and weekly themes were sometimes expanded on, alongside others' responses, so in this way, it was a site for further interpretation and response to an image.

Because most group members used their general Facebook accounts, non-*Her Mind's Eye* related information from their Facebook activities (such as posts to their own Facebook wall, or public communication with others) would be visible to other group participants, due to Facebook's sharing of posts between Facebook friends. Overall, this unintentional sharing seemed to expand knowledge distribution and enriched the formation of individual relationships, as well as facilitated ease of communication. It follows, then, that a flow of easy individualized communication might be difficult to turn off. For those involved in more complex matters such as organizing the exhibition, at times it became difficult to step away from connectivity. Posting on the group's Facebook wall was not always a reliable means of sharing information, as frequently, group members would not receive notification of these posts (depending on their settings). Sometimes there was an information landslide; chats were too fast, timed at odd hours, and resulted in group members discovering that amass of communications had built up after not

logging in, and clear information was not quickly found. Group members found a solution to this issue and were extremely quick to provide help in the form of a distilled answer.

***Social mobile communities, networks, group member as support and the domino effect.***

On Instagram, the members of *Her Mind's Eye* and myself engaged, in communication with people and organization both new and previously known. Through our presence on Instagram we realized an opportunity for greater reach to the networks and individuals that other community members were connected to. This was especially made possible by following hashtags that identify certain communities. or organizations.

In *Her Mind's Eye*, there existed a small domino effect of participating with a complex network, off-line as well as online; where participating in one network might lead to opportunities for further involvement with associated individuals, programs or networks. Many participants eagerly responded to my invitation to join a community-based story telling participatory art performance at a local café, wherein they later held an exhibition. Additional connection to art-network made by the *Her Mind's Eye* women were: participation with other larger social media-based creative communities on Instagram, the creation of local contacts (such as café owner and galleries), and connections to institution and their resources. One university student found later exhibition opportunities for *Her Mind's Eye*, and I printed the photos for our exhibition at the university's new media facility.

Indeed, each group member brought with her diverse knowledge and experiences that became part of the collective knowledge bank, and shared resources. The connections included her personal connections and knowledge of the city, and also found knowledge, such as SMP-related articles located online, and useful hashtags, that other group members could now see and make use of. Through our community, the contacts made and knowledge obtained by one, was seen to sometimes filter down, or even directly benefit other group members. These connections also led to cross media explorations within other art forms, as could be seen by the sharing of information about other art creation resources. Some group members' explorations brought together SMP and bookbinding, printmaking, photo-transferring, and performance art.

***Focus on group meetings: Relationship and learning in the city*** There were two main types of on-the-ground meetings, official group planning and organizing meetings, and photo walks.

Meeting up in person brought the “virtual to life” and was an essential factor in establishing real relational connections between the women in the group. In a focus group, the women resounded in agreement about the importance of meeting in person, and connecting a “real” person to the digital name and the intriguing photos that provided clues into each woman’s feeling, thoughts, and interests. Connecting in person was the stage whereby group members felt they began to truly know one another. It was here that the thoughts and images observed and responded to on Instagram and the text-based voices in Facebook chats became alive and rich with meaning, imbued with the warmth of physical presence, and the depth and complexities of identity.

In our regular group meetings we developed our learning supports, discussed in detail photo themes and ideas each woman was exploring, and made future plans. Group *photo walks*, wherein group members met in person in various urban neighbourhoods to take photos and edit them in a café afterwards, served primarily as sites for casual communication, collective creative investigation into urban surroundings, and the sharing of mobile photography skills and knowledge (such as introducing and teaching about editing apps and tagging). Due to their less official/organizational, and more relaxed nature, these meetings were attended by fewer of the participants, and those who attended less frequently expressed less community connection and reduced new learning about their city and mobile photography. Attendance was highest just following the exhibition, as was the bilingual communication, comradery, and shared understanding. Those who attended photo walks had a more relational, stronger community sense, but it is a question of "the chicken or the egg," which came first?

***Focus on: Facilitator roles***

*Her Mind’s Eye* was a facilitator-initiated, composite community born from a combination of practitioner experience, involvement in a local community of practice, and formal research as part of this doctoral thesis; an intersection of informal community art and art education, social media creative communities, and community action research. Because of this, unlike most existing SMPCS, numerous goals of the group were clearly outlined (see consent form, Appendix: A) and clear expectations were established, such as attendance of some meetings and participation online. This meant that there was a simple social contract with shared expectations and understandings from all parties. Because of the research component, the size of *Her Mind’s Eye* was limited, as the scope of recruitment was kept small.

Following my numerous struggles to align myself with the philosophies, beliefs and infrastructures of each, I eventually came to recognize *Her Mind's Eye* as having a three-authored family origin. This recognition led me to embrace the necessary contradictions of complex parentage. It was therefore impossible to engage in pure or traditional modes of social media community development, just as it was impossible to apply art education teaching techniques in an orthodox way, and to complete research that was direct in its approach to answering overarching research questions, due to the open, participant-guided and arts-based casual inquiry structure, the collaborative philosophies, and my recognition of a democratic sense of community at the group's core. Rather, the three-authored origin brought about meaningful, layered and influential knowledge for each of these communities. The women of *Her Mind's Eye* seemed to better understand and more quickly accept these multiple roots and functions than I had been.

Due in part to my own goals and my research objectives to develop a group, the community was also styled, with the name, graphics (icons and Facebook banner) and spaces (online accounts and cities) established prior to inviting participants. This led to *Her Mind's Eye* being a focused and bounded community, which in turn, was a space where the women who joined were similarly inspired and prepared to participate within this structure. Castro (2012) might consider these boundaries to be "the constraints that enable" (p. 152). While this foundation originated in the research design, it continued to be built upon collectively, through collaboration and the input of group members.

These constraints and the strong foundation further facilitated the establishment of a solid and practicable identity for the group, from which experimentation and visions for future projects were able to arise. Drawbacks included limitations to our ability to create completely emergent, collective visions for developing the community in the early stages.

My need to create a study of manageable size for my research, in which I could closely follow the input of the participants and ensure ethical awareness and consent to participation, resulted in the development of a closed community. As a smaller and more private community, *Her Mind's Eye* developed a structure and atmosphere of intimacy and highly active individual engagement, very different from traditional social media communities. The closed nature created safer spaces which some women expressed made her feel comfortable with meeting in person, and enabled comfortable group conversations within our closed Facebook group.

Similarly, as a doctoral research project the active research portion of the group had a set duration. For many of the women, particularly those who were academics or had numerous complex responsibilities, this made participation more accessible, as they would not feel a sense of ongoing responsibility/commitment to participating in the community.

### *Facilitating Her Mind's Eye*

As a facilitator, my role began as a doer. I had to do the work to create our digital spaces, graphic design and style, and begin communicating with all potential members. Next, I was a communicator, a connector, and finally a teacher (but what did this look like?)

**Communicator.** In this role, I needed to listen and respond. When starting out, I was highly responsive to each individual's content posts, observing and listening, raising questions, recognizing possible problems, or unresolved areas, and bringing them to the attention of the group. Key requirements are being observant/listening to group requests, comments and watching the group's progress. Additionally, to a lesser extent I was a mediator; negotiating contradictions or dissimilar visions amongst group members; a peace keeper, as having a trusted and known leader is useful for overcoming difficulties; and a weaver of community, pulling tight the strings of community to draw people closer together; and providing opportunities for participation and contribution. This latter point I struggled with due to conflicting concerns for women's time/labour, her responsibilities and her needs. I learned to ask and follow the women's cues.

**Connector.** While a communicator's job is to transfer information, a connector's goal is to bring things together. In this role, I was to help build relationships amongst people. Together with group members, I also sought out resources in the community and reached out to local business owners about exhibiting. The group facilitator retains responsibility for the health and functionality of the community, works to maintain a sense of community and to foster an ethics of care, which includes equality and respect for every member, and she does so full time. Her responsibilities include fostering communication between members, assessing and ensuring that tasks related to the construction and ongoing management of online community spaces are attended to, and continuously seeking out new opportunities for networking and possibilities for the community to engage with and be represented locally and beyond. Additional responsibilities involved: expanding the educational and cultural scope of the community by facilitating

workshops or engagement with local cultural sites, and supporting experiments in shared leadership and new initiatives envisioned and initiated by group members.

***A teacher? Reflecting upon teacher identity online.*** Castro (2012) recognizes “the art teacher as an identity that is not fixed but one that shifts throughout social media” (p.152). So how much then should a SMPC facilitator teach? This too was my question, as I transitioned into a facilitator position for *Her Mind's Eye*. I recognized the presence of a sliding scale of leadership in SMPC management, and while I knew that I shared knowledge and supported a peer-leading network, the questions of how to teach in SMPCs remained. Also, where do Facebook wall posts, group posts, workshops, and blogs, fit in? Should there exist any hierarchy between teacher or facilitator and group member? The SMPC members were oriented primary towards peer to peer leading, except for those with less formal arts training, who were interested in learning through workshops. In this shifting role I chose to move towards decentralized leadership; through group guidance (such as helping to maintain the themes), the creation of Instagram theme posters as learning supports, and prompting group members to try tagging, and consider submitting to the *#SaturdayInHerMind* weekly thematic challenges.

### ***Summary***

There were numerous structures and supports required to make collaborative inquiry possible (Schnellert and Butler, 2014) in the social media photography community of *Her Mind's Eye*. Social emotional supports emphasize the foundational conditions needed for collaborative inquiry, from community care ethics to a sense of community. Agency, ownership (and voice) places emphasis on the need for learning communities to be centered on the group members, ensuring that the core our group’s vision remains in their hands, and that creating a space for authentic expressions of voice remains at the heart of collaborative inquiry. Learning supports explores the forms of learning that occurred, from collaborative processes, to relational/friendship-based learning, multimodal learning and locational/regional learning. Structural supports, shows the sites that comprise the places of *Her Mind's Eye*, from Instagram, to in-person. Lastly a look at the structural supports identifies the facilitator as an essential role in supporting collaborative inquiry in social media photography community. As the facilitator for *Her Mind's Eye*, I took on the role of doer, communicator, connector, and teacher, that on the sliding scale of social media-based education – became facilitator.

## CHAPTER 15. Summary, implications & recommendations

### *Her Mind's Eye: Social media photography community (SMPC) in practice*

This study serves as an example of a combined arts-based and community action research project that investigated the practices and creation of an online and on-the-ground, social media photography community for women, called *Her Mind's Eye*. Three main tangents to the study examine: How to create an SMPC for women? What are women's experiences of the urban environment? Lastly, How might SMPCs contribute to women's well being?

The question of how to create and manage a social media photography community has been addressed quite thoroughly in the making it section of the description, and chapter 14 in the discussion, which reviews the types of learning that existed in *Her Mind's Eye*, and the structural supports, including the locations, conditions, and the facilitator's role that were needed. So where does *how* now fit in?

Having successfully created a SMPC for women, “how” now changes direction; it looks towards that which has been created and seeks to understand it. First, I provide a summary of findings that reviews key points of what happened and was found to be of interest. Seeing new features, “how” invariably asks—how was that done? These questions are more complex, and I answer them with a blend of observation, interpretation and literature. What was created, how did it emerge, and why is it significant?

Following the summary, I return to the two questions of SMPCs and women, and women's urban experiences, and of course, the intersecting point – What can (and can't) SMPCs reveal about women's experiences? Since there is no such thing as a perfect tool or system, I will end on a note of what they can do, and how I feel we ought to proceed as a field in this area of study. On that note, I discuss the contributions to new knowledge, and close with an invitation to art educators, to come join with me in building creative social/mobile creative communities.

### *Her Mind's Eye: Summary of findings*

#### *A multiplicity of personal & collective social/mobile photo practices in Her Mind's Eye*

*Her Mind's Eye* illustrated how a group of creative, digitally-inclined urban women could achieve a successful, connected, social-media based community of care, in which they engaged in

ongoing collaborative practices of visual inquiry through mobile photography, alongside their regular (often daily) personal photography. The photographs created in *Her Mind's Eye* convey women's observations, interpretations and experiences of the everyday, especially the ways in which they engage with place and space (Lippard, 1998). The range of uses of social media photographic practices employed by the women demonstrated how SMP was a site for aesthetic explorations, record keeping, mood regulation or (perspective-keeping), communication, participation and seeing (or) observing. That is, being aware and present within one's environment.

***Her Mind's Eye in existence! Housed in digital social sites and urban third places***

The structure of the group included online sites (primarily Instagram and Facebook), together with face-to-face meetings in a variety of urban neighbourhoods. As it grew, *Her Mind's Eye* developed features of care ethics (Nodding, 2013), a sense of community (and belonging) (Fisher, Sonn & Bishop, 2002; Hutzler, 2005), collaborative art making practices (Irwin, 1999) and an emphasis on voice and experience (Gillian, 1982). I came to recognize many of our approaches to creative practices as features of feminist pedagogies (Zimmerman, 2012). *Her Mind's Eye* came to exist through the construction of social media community spaces and practices on Instagram and Facebook, that enabled networked and group communication online, and helped us to arrange in-person meetings at *third places* like group-friendly cafés in the city (Oldenburg, 1989). In addition to the digital sites that housed *Her Mind's Eye* online, a variety of techniques were developed collaboratively by the group, and by me for maintaining our sense of community and supporting online creative inquiry. Some of these tools were drawn from the practices of other SMP communities, like Instagrammers.

***Facilitate: Bringing skills, building care communities, in cafés, and digital social spaces***

As the facilitator for *Her Mind's Eye*, in addition to laying the digital foundations of our social media homes, (i.e., setting up accounts and hashtags), my position included supporting individual creative/artistic practices, working to establish and foster a caring community, and promoting our collaborative inquiry by maintaining scheduled posts weekly. This facilitation enabled me to draw upon my knowledge of and emphasize the best practices and features of existing mobile photography and SMPC communities. These included regular physical gatherings, supporting

cross-engagement with photographs and themes, and making privacy options work within a selected social media community. Facilitation also made it possible for members to influence the plans and decisions of the group. While several techniques for collective inquiry were adopted from existing SMPCs (such as weekly themes), other developments included community contributions to weekly theme development, individual contributions to the community account, and notably, the development of an inclusive exhibition for all community members. Studying the action-process of facilitating a collaborative community demonstrated the valuable and even perhaps necessary role of the *facilitator* in social media photography communities (SMPCS). Additionally, as a facilitator, I was responsible for watching and listening, identifying, presenting, and addressing problems. My skillsets as an experienced art-teacher and social/mobile photographer in SMPCs, enabled me to do so.

***A digital house, with walls.*** *Research origins and a comfortable foundation to build upon*

Unexpectedly, a feature of *Her Mind's Eye* that set it apart from existing regionally-specific social media photography communities was its highly defined structure, largely a result of its partial origins in research. *Her Mind's Eye's* research-constructed boundaries included: a shared though broad focus (her view of the city), a purpose (research and community building), and clarified/established boundaries. Boundaries included the group size (number of people), a focus statement, an established duration for stage one, participation (resulting in committed participants), pre-determined digital sites (Instagram and Facebook), initial online communication techniques (like pre-selected hashtags), and an ethics agreement that included security information around social media, collaboration, and ownership/voice in distribution of content produced. Never before had I seen participants enjoy an ethics form so much. These features certainly differentiated *Her Mind's Eye* from other regional SMPCs, and may have well contributed to its success. The defined nature of *Her Mind's Eye* as an on/offline social media photography community enabled the women to engage in an effective collective process of mutual inquiry and collaborative knowledge formation. As a focused and bounded regional social/mobile photography community, *Her Mind's Eye* could possibly serve as a new model for social media-based creative communities.

***Energy at the conflux: Learning to learn in-between, together.*** These findings speaks to the possibility of in-between spaces as highly generative and lush, in this case, at the intersection between traditional institutions and modes of learning; and emergent, technologically-facilitated informal communities of interest and personal inquiry. The confluence of features made possible by the blending of different practices, spaces, ways of being and knowing, (such as university research, urban spaces, women's community, social media photography and art education) resulted in a productive, stimulating, community that addressed numerous and varied needs. This blending was supported by the pedagogical practices of care, friendship and sense of community (trust and belonging) (Thurber & Zimmerman, 2002).

By looking at regional, informal urban SMPCs as sites for shared interest and practice of visual cultural and art forms, this study adds to the existing body of literature on Communities of Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), Visual Culture Art Communities (Freedman, Heijnen, Kallio-Tavin, Kárpáti & Papp, 2013), and Participatory Culture (Jenkins, 2007). It also points to new possibilities for teachers as facilitators within regional social media communities, and the need for art education to develop creative on/offline facilitator techniques, and to find ways to make these communities sustainable.

***Her self-to-self-awareness and virtual co-presence: Seeing through many digital eyes***

An exciting discovery for members of *Her Mind's Eye* and myself was group members' recognition of their positive experience of expanded visual awareness of their local environments. Many of the women who were very active in this community described their having experienced an increased awareness of the everyday, and a growth in their ability to see, observe, feel and read the urban environment because of their considerations not only of what others see, but how they see, feel, and interpret their surrounding world. Several women even described an expanded awareness or understanding of how other individuals around them on a daily basis may interact or respond to happenings and objects in the urban environment. Such experiences recall theories of collective intelligence (Lévy, 1997) and of the hive mind (Kroski, 2005), which are given new meaning and possibility when considered in the light of networked visual, social/emotional and woman's ways of knowing. What might an intuition about a neighbourhood or community, look like on the scale of a mega-city? What possibilities could exist from a network of urban women's aware observations?

Therefore, the photographs created by the women members of *Her Mind's Eye* represent their ways of seeing, engaging with, and choices about how to present themselves and their urban environments. Through social/mobile photography practice, our experiences are told visually and temporally, experienced immediately in the moment, through virtual co-presence (Licoppe, 2004), in a scrolling delayed review, or in a collection of visual journal entries. Our practice of social/mobile photography community in *Her Mind's Eye* served for many as an uplifting experience and a relational community of care and support in urban centers, where we could document and express our visions and feelings, and receive feedback from others who care and are similarly interested in inquiring into our surroundings. In this manner and others, *Her Mind's Eye* enabled a connected and embodied investigation into women's everyday environments.

***Her Mind's Eye, SMPCs and women:***

***Women's ways of knowing in social/mobile photography community***

***Shared experience, vision, voice & virtual co-presence, for embodied collective intelligence.***

*Her Mind's Eye* served as a space for community and a site for *her* photographs, *her* voice, *her* sight, and *her* shared experience. These contributed to a greater connection and understanding of *her* urban environment, as well as provided an overall sense of awareness through collective/shared knowing. As an SMPC, *Her Mind's Eye* drew together women from different urban neighbourhoods to get to know one another both online and on the ground. In so doing, it presented the possibilities that SMPCs hold for the development of local and extended networks, and a relationally connected and communicative community, which contribute to *social capital* (Putnam, 1995), resonating with Hezul's (2005) observation that community arts are sites of social capital formation and community development.

Women communicate effectively through social/mobile photography practices, and the SMPC *Her Mind's Eye* provided a particularly conducive micro-community wherein photo creation and communication was constant due to an active community being maintained. While the mobile photographs served as individual sites for remembering, inquiring, and representation of self, they also functioned as forms of communication. If it is the case that women (even more than men) (Hjorth, 2008; Lee & Sohn, 2004) use mobile photography as a mode of communication, this has great significance for how we consider women's ways of and needs for expression and communication. Even traditional subjects such as landscapes and still-lives

contained embedded poetic, inquiring, or personally-relating messages that connected the representation closely with the mind, feelings, actions, experiences or choices of the woman who created it. Susan Ford (1991) speaks of “recovering the right of women to look” which frequently involves “a different scale, a different aesthetic... which differs from more masculinist interpretations” (p.154) Meanwhile, Lee (2005) calls for “an experiential understanding [...] of the ways in which new digital communication technologies such as mobile phones equipped with digital cameras have been embodied in women’s daily lives”, as, in the “recent formation of a camera phone culture [...] women, especially those in their teens and twenties, have become active participants in creating its culture” (para. 3).

These mobile photographic representations of our engagement with urban spaces and our everyday experiences resonate with Lippard’s (1998) notion of places being created as we enter spaces and contribute to imbuing them with layered actions, memories, feelings, representations and imaginations. Furthermore, through our social sharing of these experiences, our actions have farther reaching effects on the meanings and ways in which others (both within our SMPC and in the greater mobile photography networks) come to see and inscribe meaning and purpose to places. In our community, through which many of us experience daily digital co-presence (Licoppe, 2004) and proximal engagement with other women members during or near the action or moment of her experience, we have come to know each other better. In knowing another group member, we come to care about the ways she interacts, influences, and is impacted by spaces and urban life experiences. More and more we care about what she sees, and we respond in ways which we believe to be useful, insightful or encouraging. Through ongoing engagement with her photographic practices over time, we begin to understand how she sees and lives urban life.

Many of the women expressed the view that participation resulted in a broadened awareness of one’s everyday environment, and expanded their ways of both perceiving and engaging with the everyday world. The ongoing taking/viewing/sharing of photos of memories, ideas, dreams, and observations in daily life, enabled seeing through *her* (other women’s) eyes. In this way, it succeeded in its goal of contributing to wellness for women, by creating a space for expression, reception, and both personal and collaborative responses and inquiry iterations. In so doing, it fostered her expression of voice, provided her with an experience of belonging and care in community, met some needs for continued development of creative skills, and served as a space for inquiry into and influence her environment by distributing her visions and experiences

both within our somewhat private Instagram-based community, within the greater sphere of regional social mobile photographers, and by sharing their images to other topical groups.

Finally, as a community *Her Mind's Eye* was able to create a presence for ourselves and our voices to be expressed together, through our first month long exhibition (and follow up exhibitions) in Montreal. Not only were our works seen by those beyond our personal networks who were drawn into the gallery, many group members also enjoyed bringing very important people from their lives to the exhibit, to show their work and talk about their ways of seeing and experiencing urban places. In this way we increased our belonging to local places, and by bringing our works and presence within places, we added new layers of definition to place. Now, a bookstore is also a site for a women's photo gallery place.

### ***Urban life seen through social/mobile photography and Her Mind's Eye***

While the photographs in our community spoke to some of the sites and features of the urban environment, the viewpoints present in the images was far from those of distanced observers. Indeed, the photographs were sites of representation of each woman's personality, her philosophies, and approaches to negotiating and experiencing spaces in her city.

The ways in which photography was used by the women of *Her Mind's Eye* (presented in the description section and discussed in depth in chapter 12) illustrate the complexities of her daily interactions with the city, continuously navigating, designing, ascribing meaning to, judging and being, and co-being (collectively being present alongside another) within the city, shows that we don't simply live in the city, we live the city.

The city lives through us. In the photographs produced by the members of *Her Mind's Eye*, we demonstrate how we make our spaces (especially our homes); we negotiate, or remove from our memories and records, spaces we don't like (they are avoided, perhaps never photographed). We fight or lament elements of spaces we cannot change. We re-imagine or re-cast them into a new story of our making. We aestheticize them and in so doing, frequently improve them; often times, we select where we are (by moving throughout our cities) and create where we want to be (through thoughts, imagination, and physical modification mostly of our homes). In these ways, we personalize our urban experiences of place, and we take great enjoyment from sharing and placing our own visions in public sites through urban exhibitions.

Throughout our pictures, several significant sites and features in the urban environment emerged as being significant to women, and women's ideal urban space. Nature was frequently sought out by group members; it frequently was represented as a site for de-compressing and being fully present in one's surroundings, represented as a source of joy, hope, and even as a means for reflecting on the nature of life abstractly and our recent experiences. Accessible sites, those of belonging and freedom were also important to our Instagram community. As for freedom, the primary site was our homes, where at least, we could often leave our mark and be ourselves. Perhaps freedom was also found in our walks around the neighbourhood in nature. Other sites where we enjoyed partial freedom or belonging included cafés, family or friends' homes, and public spaces such as university buildings, art studios, and the streets and parks around us. These types of accessible sites may be seen as third-spaces (Oldenburg, 1998) There were also transient spaces such as transit, which are both ours and not. They are frequently sites of introspection, observation, and for some, free time/space for mobile creation and communication. Our photos showed that urban sites of culture and nature are places of peace, reflection, and history, containing a depth of meaning for the women of *Her Mind's Eye*. These ideal spaces range from a single elegant tree in a public park, to historic buildings (which frequently also have freely accessible shared spaces, like surrounding parks).

Our responses to the question of where we create further demonstrated that our needs for *making spaces* are not being met. This has specific implications for art education, both informally and formally, it suggests in part why *Her Mind's Eye*, as a digital site that incorporated third space and temporary spaces, may have been particularly attractive for women participants, as it provided a space for creation, distribution and even creative community. The topic of women's experiences of their urban environment through social media photographic practices highlighted the ways in which women authored and uniquely created their own experiences of urban life by envisioning aesthetic enjoyment/beauty and imaginative or dream-like scenes. Beauty in our experiences was tied to an individual sensation, possibly aesthetic, or perhaps a visceral sensation of a powerful and uplifting admiration or awe for a scene or subject. Beauty could be found anywhere, even in black and white alleyways and cement wall cracks.

### ***Considering what SMPC's can and cannot research***

As for research, exciting possibilities, problems, and complexities remain surrounding the use of ICTs with collaborative leadership practices, and visual communication/creation which these

sites provide. The benefits of creating social media photography communities as research include their potential to open a window to participants' daily lived experiences; their ability to enable participation to a great degree between communities of place, cultural difference, and language; their accessibility to participants and their contributions to creating locational networks, of relationships and resources, that can then be used by participants beyond the scope of the project. Challenges to potential SMPC researchers might include a general aversion to sharing difficult or negative content on social media, therefore limiting possibilities for new critical observations and more direct means of addressing urban needs. As one can see, many of these limitations and benefits represent two sides of the same coin. The very intimate and social nature that brings about such personal, embodied experiences, in compelling photos that convey a depth of information, may also be why one might provide selective representations of experience, as part of the modern requirement for online identities to be performance or selling of self.

Research should also be conducted into identifying what differences, similarities and overlapping areas might be experienced by research conducted on social media and with photography exploring women's lived experiences, and to women's SMPCs for community development. Particularly into how the requirements for each is met, may contribute to, or mitigate the needs of the other. For example, Mak, Mitchell and Stuart (2004) demonstrate that photo voice conducted offline can effectively identify regional sites in which women feel unsafe or have experienced violence, a topic, which is rarely presented on popular social media applications.

### ***Relevance/implications for art education & recommendations for teachers and researchers***

***Invitation to teach social/mobile creative communities in the cloud.*** In *Her Mind's Eye*, my experience imbued me with the abilities that I needed to create and facilitate a social media photography community. Not only could I develop and support it, I could also use my knowledge and capacity to observe and listen towards improving it. I made use of a full range of skill sets, from social leadership, to local community engagement, art production and dissemination, and the capacity I quickly learned as a teacher to be a self-learner and sharer of knowledge. I knew how to review, revise and re-invent my techniques of guidance and management in order to adapt to the needs, expectations, and realities of others. After many years of practice, I have learned to teach in a more holistic manner described by Miller (2007) as *a transformational teaching*

position (Hart, 2009). This is similar to collaborative learning (Chan, 2013; Kafai & Fields, 2013) which Lalonde and Castro (2015) identify as a characteristic of social media learning communities, “wherein there emerges a mutual exchange of engagement, not only in the subject but in the performance of a practice” (p. 58). Therefore, when approaching digital social art practices within art education, I was well positioned to explore, lead and teach practices and perspectives that both align with existing art and education theory, and can be further aligned with contemporary social and locational needs, and techno-mediated realities of our students.

We live in a world where we are increasingly relying on social-technologies that are designed to connect us (Veenhof et al., 2008; Turkle, 2011). It is a changing, globalized world where such technologies play important roles in our staying connected to who we are, where we are, and with those who we love. Social technologies are increasingly replacing traditional, local and cultural practices of social engagement and communication which can even lead us to being more isolated (Turkle, 2011) and in our desires to stay relevant, lead us to participating in neo-liberal or consumerist practices of communication (Lalonde & Castro, 2015). In these ways, and in global reactions to them, sociality, community, experience and creativity are changing.

Teachers have long served as guides in socialization and citizenship, many doing her part towards building peaceful and happy societies with inquiring, activated and creative minds. *Her Mind's Eye* provides a glimpse of what experimenting within this new technologically mediated society might positively mean, for strengthening our growing communities and supporting lesser heard voices and challenging representation by the dominant few. An exciting possibility, is the role social technologies can play in innovation and revisions to our collective understandings and negotiations of meaning in the world, in connection with such theories as swarm intelligence (Beni & Wang, 1989), collective intelligence (Lévy, 1997), the hive mind (Kroski, 2005), cultural flows (Appadurai, 1996) and flows of innovation (Sylvan, 2006). I'm inspired by that twinkle of a possibility which social media communities have for rapid innovation, should we as a community find ways to sustain ourselves and overcome struggles that divide us.

The effective capacity for social media and local community programming to lead to greater local connectedness, and recognition of other's views and experiences of the cities holds implications for Canadians. In particular, it presents a possible solution for the negative correlation between increased social media usage and Canadian's ownership of mobile phones (Ipsos Reid, 2011) as well as urban Canadian's experiences of social isolation and "low quality

personal networks” (Vézina, 2001). For this reason, and the recognition that Canadians are using online tools to connect with community on and offline (Veenhof et al., 2008), I recommend that the creation and maintenance of regionally specific social media communities should be considered by policy makers and public planners, researchers, as well as explored as a new focal area for leadership in community arts education as a means for citizenship, a sense of belonging, and in support of community connectedness.

As art educators, we need to further develop (teaching techniques, tools, and theory) in the area of facilitation of communities of creative practice. An area of importance to women, and necessary for work with children, is that of group boundaries (such as size and accessibility) and safety, topics which are also tied to community growth and sustainability. We need to study and develop new digital tools (applications), and amalgamate research and recorded practitioner experiences around social/digital tools already being incorporated into education and artistic production. At the same time, we should be conceptualizing new modes of utilizing, influencing the development of, and cross-selecting from (incorporating the multiple capabilities of) popular and freely available tools. Further research should be conducted around the ways that social media photography communities function, and how social media applications both enable and counter free speech, and support and limit creative, collaborative, and social developments (Gardner and Davis, 2013). Art educators also ought to explore existing interdisciplinary research around online and social creative communities in connected fields like media studies, and apply this knowledge towards ICTs and social/digital community facilitation in Art Education.

*Her Mind's Eye* demonstrated that communities based online need not be only that. As a tool for creativity, media and written expressivity and connectedness, social media communities are a jumping off point (Foster, 2013) which can later lead to increased physical presence and productions in person and in place. Foster explains, “social networking sites provide a jumpstart to social interaction, as well as a way to build upon that interaction in the form of social capital” (p. 152). Online creative communities (like mobile photography communities or SMPCs) enable us to come together in public and accessible urban spaces and third spaces (Oldenburg, 1989; Foster, 2013), whereby we can inform and contribute to the message and function of a space. Looking to our exhibition in a beautiful old bookstore in Montreal begins to shed light on the potential for positive cross-impact between on/offline SMPCs and local sites. The influence of creative actions and communities of practice on sites (or, creative place making, Markusen &

Gadwa, 2010) is mutually beneficial for creative groups, and for their local regional communities, leading to economic benefits via the creative economy, and due to enlivening of participation within local spaces (Huzel, 2005; Kim, Merrill, Miller & Yaktes, n.d.).

Art education similarly needs to look beyond our boundaries of discipline and established institutions, which are limited in their scope of accessibility, to continue developing ways in which women's ongoing artistic and creative development, alongside expressions of voice and influence on local (to global) culture can be established. We can look to practices in other fields such as participatory media within media studies (Botero, 2013; Jung, Toriumi & Mizukoshi, 2013; Jung, Ball-Rokeach, Kim & Matei, 2007), participatory design (Baibarac, 2015) and collaborative digital storytelling (High, Mills & Zembrzycki, 2012) in design studies which demonstrate other manners in which limitations of financing, time, and maintenance of social harmony; and safety/respect for individual stories is maintained. Similarly, the university should continue to engage in the mutually beneficial practice of community-based research, which is demonstrated as a rich, complex site for generating knowledge, and has notable impact on the development and sustenance of urban places, supporting site-specific and greater social transformations, and the advancement of culture (Hetzul, 2005).

If we do not learn, and find ways to sustain the best practice of ICTs, social media, and other new technological tools, we will be stepping out of the cultural, communicative and generative practices, which increasingly are implicated in daily human life. We will be taking our knowledge, social support skills and capacities for creative adaptation with us. Hull and Stornaiuolo (2010) look to social media production and participation as necessary forms of literacy and cosmopolitan educational practice, claiming "the rewards could not be greater or the risk of failure more grave, for educating a citizenry able and willing to communicate with digital tools across differences in a radically interconnected yet divided world" (p. 85)

If we do not make use of these tools to support human and creative ideals, we will surely witness them being used towards the opposite, as a means for control, and to perpetuate social inequalities. The beauty, concerns, and complexity of new digital technologies is that we hold them in our hands. How we use them is up to us. Finally, those in the field of art education should prepare themselves to be influencers of social and creative technologies in policy making, in our communities and classrooms, in lobbying, through learning/informing, and in designing and influencing the creation of technologies existing and yet to come. We need not follow the

crowds in how we use them. Building on feminist practices and pedagogies, we can apply an ethics of care alongside an emancipatory, engaged, and social agenda. We must find ways to subvert and re-appropriate digital tools and the structures that inform them, activating them towards creativity and always, finding ways to gather together safely and communicating feely, finding ways to move beyond our limitations, perceived and real, towards diversity, growth and freedom.

### *Contributions to knowledge*

This study joins a growing field in art education studying alternative learning communities in online and social media space, (Lalonde and Castro, 2015; Delacruz, 2009; Freedman, Heijnen, Kallio-Tavin, Kárpáti, & Papp, 2013, Hart, 2012; Rees, 2014). The development and study of *Her Mind's Eye* has exemplified new possible forms for creative collaborating and lifelong arts development in urban neighbourhoods, through *micro-SMPCs*: informal, adult, online/on-the-ground social media photography communities, that are small in size, focused in topic, with some delineated boundaries that function as supports for many group members.

Furthermore, the study contributes to furthering the development of art education practices such as social/mobile photography, that can promote women's capacities for free visual, aesthetic, social, and personal representation in society (Lee, 2005; Hjorth, 2013). Informal women's urban photo networks can be sites for addressing women's voice and representation of her experiences in the urban environment, the greatest benefit perhaps being from the formation of relational networks that can support greater developments offline, and fuel innovation online. Freedman et al. (2013) observe that informal creative learning communities are comprised of people who “desire to learn and seek a form of art education” different from “formal education [which] seems to be artistically or culturally narrow” (para. 24), we can further these implications for women's art education needs in urban spaces.

*Her Mind's Eye* serves as a practice-based example (or model) that illuminates how art education and social media in urban spaces, specifically, social/mobile-photography, can facilitate personal and collaborative inquiry into lived experiences, with such digital/place-based art community practices contributing towards increased environmental and social awareness. Darts (2004) reminds art educators that politics and popular culture are enacted and woven throughout the materials, actions and experiences of the everyday, and serve as a means by which the structures, conditions and controls of society are perpetuated, and “social, political,

psychological, and cultural struggles” are enacted (p. 315). He suggest then that art education should then have as its goal, making visible the *invisibility* of the everyday. Drawing from existing mobile photo community practices, the study of *Her Mind’s Eye* has identified and developed tools, techniques, and social/emotional and structural supports for aiding independent and collaborative inquiry. It has supported the creation of online/on-the-ground relational connectedness, that for many of the women of *Her Mind’s Eye*, brought about a growth in awareness through participation in social media photography community. The photographs produced in *Her Mind’s Eye* represent both norms of social media photography, and the possibility for collective inquiry that, through iterations of practice, moves towards critical, personal and interpersonal awareness. In so doing, it demonstrates how a focused purpose (or) defined community, operated collaboratively with the influence and support of a full time facilitator, can serve as a sites for everyday realizations of meaningful social-visual inquiry. It also demonstrates how such focused communities are likely to adapt to meet the needs, ways of knowing, and values for communication and community held by the group members.

***Closing thoughts: Her photographs and her mind’s eye.***

It was through the individual actions and thought processes of each woman that many found within *Her Mind’s Eye* a space for sustained explorations into elements of her urban experiences throughout the course of daily life. In each woman’s artwork and selection of imagery, aspects of her story and vision are shared. Her life is revealed and obscured. Her jokes are told, and her dreams are dreamt. Her reality is taken in through her eyes and mind, then shared through the social media filter within her photographs. She wraps her thoughts and feelings and observations around herself as a blanket of knowing; hangs them on the wall as high art; then spreads them out on the floor as a mystery, and distributes them through wired and wireless networks as late breaking news, social advertisements/recommendations to friends; as her walking map of imagined urban design, or her Alice in Wonderland dream overlaid onto reality. She uses photos and questions in her SMPC as prompts to begin new relationships, and explores them offline and in other social media networks (like Facebook) in different ways. They are springboards for further questions, she through numerous cycles of iteration she explores them more deeply. Her photos can become journals collecting treasures not to be forgotten, sites for learning and layering meaning over places in the city, and an individual and collective alternative media. In all these forms, they are her voice, her representation of life, and manifestations of *her mind’s eye*.

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## APPENDIX A: GROUP 1 SAMPLE CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN*****Through her mind's eye: Women's views of urban life explored through informal arts education in on & offline mobile photography communities.***

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research project being conducted by Laurel Hart of the Department of Art Education of Concordia University (Laurel Hart can be reached at: 514-409-4278 or via email at [hermindseyeca@gmail.com](mailto:hermindseyeca@gmail.com)); under the supervision of Linda Szabad-Smyth of the Department of Art Education of Concordia University ([lsmyth@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:lsmyth@alcor.concordia.ca), 514-848-2424 ext. 4645).

**A. PURPOSE**

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is as follows:

First, **to study the process of developing a non-traditional learning community** that:

- 1) exists both in person (physical spaces) and digitally (online),
- 2) supports women in learning new technology (specifically mobile photography and Instagram) and
- 3) seeks to create an encouraging and supportive digital photographic art creation community for women, leading to
- 4) the promotion and exhibition of women's artwork.

The second purpose of the research is **to illustrate women's experience of living in the urban environment**, with the end goal of creating an exhibition that highlights each women's view and/or experience of urban life through her photography.

**B. PROCEDURES**

I understand that:

- Participation in this project will take place online through Instagram, a group website, and via a private group Facebook page, as well as a physical locations (such as a university, gallery, museum space, and perhaps coffee shops) in the vicinity of downtown Montreal or in the Plateau Montreal area.
- My participation in this project will take place from September 2014 to July 2015, with my active participation in the group as led by Laurel Hart taking place during the first approximately 6 months of this project, with participation being flexible based on group plans.
- During the first phase of this study, I will need to attend approximately one virtual workshop/session and one group meeting each month (1-2 hours each), subject to change with the consensus/needs of the group.
- I understand that throughout this project, I will be asked to take photos under the overarching theme of "how I see and experience living in the city" and according to my own themes and interests. I will also be encouraged to comment and respond to other group members images on Instagram or other photo hosting services.
- I understand that I will be publishing these photos on Instagram along with a tag (a search term proceeded by a # symbol such as #instagram) created for this group.
- I understand that these sessions may be recorded in audio or video format, and that sessions, digital communications (including, for example, emails and comments) and photos produced will be collected digitally, examined and published only as research by Laurel Hart, and my work will be attributed to me.

- I understand that I may have the option to provide feedback about the group in the form of interviews or surveys, which will be recorded and used as part of Laurel Hart's research.
- I will be required to attend a virtual workshop which will address safety, issues of privacy, as well as copyright and ethical issues, so that I will be informed about my rights and the risks and benefits associated with mobile photography and publishing online prior to participating in the group.
- Laurel Hart will send me any writing about me or my work via email, and I will have two weeks to respond with suggestions, questions and required changes. If I do not provide feedback in two weeks Laurel will deem it acceptable to me. I can request more time if needed, or I can ask to meet in person or online to discuss my changes or ideas, and Laurel will make these changes to the writing.
- I can approach Laurel Hart anytime (via email or by arranging a meeting) with any of my questions or concerns about Instagram or the research process. I can at any time request for certain comments or images to be omitted from the study.
- I am also free to discontinue participation at any time, with the exception/limitation that once my work is published online and/or when research is shared/presented, I will no longer be able to withdraw the work already published.
- I understand that I will be asked to review, and may request modification of any representations of me or my work prior to Laurel Hart's thesis publication.

### **C. RISKS AND BENEFITS**

#### Benefits may include:

- I will retain full ownership of the images, text and any other content that I create, and (if I choose) I will be cited/promoted as the creator of my images.
- I will have the opportunity to participate in research, and I may learn more about myself, my art & ideas, and the community I am involved in. I will be able to review writing about me or my work, and I can provide my feedback and require changes be made about my story.
- I understand that through this project, I will have the opportunity to participate in an online and offline women's mobile photography community, in which I will meet, share, and learn with and from other women with varying levels of expertise who are also engaged in mobile photography work. I understand that this group (and my work) may be recorded, promoted and shared through Facebook, Instagram, and through other online and offline sources.
- I understand that I will also have the opportunity to learn more about mobile photography practice and artistic use of mobile photography through workshops that cover topics that may include: how to use Instagram; legal, safety, privacy/copyright & ethical issues with mobile photography; mobile-photo editing; and developing an artistic community.
- I understand that I may have the opportunity to participate in a final group exhibition where I will exhibit photos that I have created during this project, and I agree to grant Laurel Hart permission to print and show my work for the purpose of this exhibition.
- I understand that I may be able to continue with my involvement in this group, including future exhibitions, meetups, and group activities once the workshop sessions with Laurel Hart have come to an end, and that at this time, new members will be allowed to join. (I understand that I am not required to continue my participation and can choose my degree of continued involvement.)

Risks may include:

- The photos I produce and any personal information that I publish (such as name, location, personal details) will be viewable by members of the group, and possibly by members of the public. Everything I publish online will be available to Instagram and also to third parties that Instagram allows (such as advertising affiliates of Instagram).
- I understand that the content I post through Facebook or Instagram will fall under the terms of service and privacy policies established by these institutions. The photos and information that I publish online will be located on mostly US internet servers, and therefore fall under the US Patriot ACT (which allows the US government to search data and collecting personal information.)
- I understand that I will not be able to withdraw or be removed from the study once the study has been published (in conferences or journals), or the thesis has been submitted for review.
- I understand that any content I publish online may be irreversible (published permanently, due to the nature of the Internet), and may become publically accessible. I understand that it may also be lost or removed, so I should back up my work.

**D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime prior to publication without negative consequences. I will be able to continue participating in the general/open educational group, and I will not be individually referenced in publications to follow. If I withdraw, personalized unpublished data (including photographs I've taken) will be removed from Laurel Hart's files, although my image, voice and comments will remain in general records of sessions.
- I understand that my participation in this study is non-confidential (please *circle or place large X next to one*):

NON-CONFIDENTIAL "SOMEWHAT PRIVATE" (i.e., the researcher will know, but **will not disclose my identity in research publications**, and will use a new pseudonym in place of my real name and "handle" (online name). I may choose to use private online accounts viewable only to group members in Instagram, and I realize that Instagram and its affiliates will have access to all information that I provide, according to their terms of service and privacy policy. I will take full responsibility for how much of my identity I reveal online and through social media used with this project. I understand the inherent limitations to privacy presented by this study, and I will not hold Laurel Hart responsible for any loss of privacy, and I appreciate that any advice she provides towards protecting my privacy online is limited. My identity will be known to physically meeting members of the community group.

**OR**

NON-CONFIDENTIAL "VIRTUAL IDENTITY ONLY" (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my real name in research publications, but will refer to me only by my Instagram name or "handle." My work will be shared online and promoted using my "handle" or online name. I will choose how much I interact with social media groups with my real identity or online handle. My identity will be known to physically meeting members of the group.)

**OR**

NON-CONFIDENTIAL "PROMOTING REAL IDENTITY" (i.e., my identity including my full name and possibly images depicting me will be revealed in study results and shared online. My identity will be known to physically meeting members of the group.)

- I understand that the data from this study may be published, in any or all of the following formats including: conferences, presentations, journal articles, as a book or book chapter, thesis, in online versions of these formats, and other possible educational or research related formats unknown at this time. **I grant Laurel Hart permission to reproduce my photographic works, written content including online communication or audio/video recordings** that I have created or contributed as part of study, **in these and other research related formats**, with acknowledgement (according to level of confidentiality selected) and without remuneration (payment). I grant Laurel Hart permission to alter digital copies of my works for these publications (for example, cropping or re-sizing), as well as presenting them in a variety of formats (including printed, projected, published online, etc.)
- I understand that I will be responsible for all content that I publish and for abiding by Instagram's and Facebook's terms of service. I understand that by publishing content as part of this study, I am claiming creation and ownership of content unless otherwise stated. I agree to post my own unique content free from copyright infringement. I understand that I will be responsible for gaining written consent from any individual photographed if they are identifiable, prior to publishing the image.
- I understand that I will be using my own smartphone or camera and technology.
- I understand that prior to beginning participation in this study, it is my responsibility to attend a virtual workshop session that discusses safety, the social/legal responsibilities, and related issues surrounding Instagram and online publication.
- I understand that in order to participate, I must be 18 years old or older. By signing, I certify this to be true.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator

*Laurel Hart, Department of Art Education, [hermindseyeca@gmail.com](mailto:hermindseyeca@gmail.com); or Linda Szabad-Smyth of the Department of art Education of Concordia University, [lsmyth@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:lsmyth@alcor.concordia.ca) , ph. 514-848-2424 ext. 4645.*

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Advisor, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 [ethics@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:ethics@alcor.concordia.ca).

## APPENDIX B: GROUP 2 SAMPLE CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN*****Through her mind's eye: Women's views of urban life explored through informal arts education in on & offline mobile photography communities.***

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research project being conducted by Laurel Hart of the Department of Art Education of Concordia University (Laurel Hart can be reached at: 514-409-4278 or via email at [laurel.hart@concordia.ca](mailto:laurel.hart@concordia.ca)); under the supervision of Linda Szabad-Smyth of the Department of Art Education of Concordia University ([lsmyth@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:lsmyth@alcor.concordia.ca), 514-848-2424 ext. 4645).

**A. PURPOSE**

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is as follows:

First, **to study the process of developing a non-traditional learning community** that:

- 1) exists both in person (physical spaces) and digitally (online),
- 2) supports women in learning new technology (specifically mobile photography and Instagram) and
- 3) seeks to create an encouraging and supportive digital photographic art creation community for women, leading to
- 4) the promotion and exhibition of women's artwork.

**B. PROCEDURES**

I understand that:

- I will be interviewed about my history and experience as a facilitator/organizer of neighbourhood and/or online art communities, and/or as a committed participant.
- I will participate in one or more interviews lasting 1-2 hours each in duration.
- These interviews will be audio or video recorded and then transcribed into written word.
- The written transcript will be sent to me via email, and I will have the opportunity to change, remove, specify, or correct my words if I wish. If I do not respond within two weeks with changes, Laurel will continue working with the transcripts and assume that I considered it acceptable. I can request a time extension to review, or I can ask to meet or talk on the phone to discuss changes.
- The final write up about our interview will be sent to me and I will have the opportunity to make any suggestions or changes for two weeks, following which Laurel will deem it acceptable to me. Again, I can ask for more time to read and make changes if needed.
- I will be invited to provide photos that relate to my interview that may be included in research, writings and publications and attributed to me.
- Digital media content such as online videos, blog entries etc. may be produced from my interview for educational and promotional purposes. Depending on the degree of confidentiality that I choose, I may be represented in video format, audio format, through my photographs, and/or in text.
- Results from the interview process will be published as research in the form of a thesis, and other research formats.

**C. RISKS AND BENEFITS**

Potential Benefits:

- I may receive publication and promotion for myself and the group that I am involved in, and I will have my ideas and work experiences attributed to me.

- I will have the opportunity to share my knowledge and experience, which may help future organizers and educators, and can contribute to the field of mobile photography and their communities.
- I may be able to learn from other community organizers experiences through presentations or publication of this research, and to exchange some ideas based on Laurel Hart's experience in mobile photography.
- This research may contribute to the development of a larger/stronger mobile photography community network.

#### Potential Risks

- I understand that there is a risk that I may be represented inaccurately, or that during the interview I might reveal personal information, or other information that I do not want to be published. To minimize this risk, I will have the opportunity to review my transcript following the interview to remove such content, except if I reveal information that Laurel Hart is legally required to report to authorities.
- If I choose to release my video recording, audio recording, real name or "handle" (online name), I understand that I am revealing my identity and this information will be made available to researchers and the general public. Once this is published online or in other public formats, it will become irretrievable.

#### **D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime prior to publication or presentation without negative consequences. If I withdraw, all documentation of the interviews and any images I have provided will be permanently deleted.
- I understand that my participation in this study is (please *circle one*):

CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity, and will use a pseudonym for my real name and "handle" (online name). All interviews will be transcribed in writing, following which the original audio or video recordings will be destroyed. )

**OR**

NON-CONFIDENTIAL - PARTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my real name in studies, but will refer to me only by my Instagram name or "handle.")

**OR**

NON-CONFIDENTIAL – FULL (i.e., my identity (full name with my "handle") will be revealed in study results)

- I understand that the data from this study may be published, in any or all of the following formats including: conferences, presentations, journal articles, as a book or book chapter, thesis, in online versions of these formats, and other possible research related formats unknown at this time. **I grant Laurel Hart permission to reproduce content from this interview and any photographs I provide** as part of the interview, in these and other research related formats, with acknowledgement (according to level of confidentiality selected) and without remuneration (payment).
- I grant Laurel Hart permission to publish (*circle all that apply*):
  - VIDEO recordings of my interview
  - PHOTOGRAPHS of my interview
  - AUDIO recordings of my interview
  - TRANSCRIBED / WRITTEN records of my interview

- I understand that I will be responsible for everything that I say, and that I will present my own ideas, visual content and experiences, and will attribute others for their ideas, visual content or experiences when necessary.
- I understand that the data from this study may be published, in any or all of the following formats including: conferences, presentations, journal articles, as a book or book chapter, thesis, in online versions of these formats, and other possible educational or research related formats unknown at this time. **I grant Laurel Hart permission to reproduce any photographic works, written or audio/recorded content** that I have created and provided/contributed as part of study, in these and other research related formats, with acknowledgement and without payment. I grant Laurel Hart permission to alter digital copies of my works for these publications (for example, cropping or re-sizing), as well as presenting them in a variety of formats (including printed, projected, published online, etc.)
- I understand that in order to participate, I must be 18 years old or older. By signing, I certify this to be true.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator

*Laurel Hart, Department of Art Education, laurel.hart@concordia.ca; or Linda Szabad-Smyth of the Department of art Education of Concordia University, lsmyth@alcor.concordia.ca , ph. 514-848-2424 ext. 4645.*

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Advisor, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 [ethics@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:ethics@alcor.concordia.ca).

## Glossary and Acronyms

### **Social/Mobile Photography | Social Media Photography (SMP) | Mobile Photography**

I use these terms interchangeably (though different in their origins and perhaps meaning).

*Social media photography (SMP)* refers to the practice of photography that relies heavily on the use of social media photography applications and social networks in the process of composing, taking, distributing, and engaging with the image (or viewership). Most frequently, the social media photography practice I refer to here takes place within the application Instagram. I have chosen to expand this definition beyond reference to Instagram alone for several reasons. These include the cross-platform nature of Instagram usage, such as posting to Twitter, Facebook, and other sites, as well as existing (and surely, soon to be existing) rival companies/applications, a notable one being EyeEm. Furthermore, SMP practices and the applications used frequently differ between countries and change with time, as can be seen in the present tendency in Japan to share photographs primarily through Twitter, and the popularity of the social platform, Line.

*Mobile photography* refers to the portable nature of the practice from initial creation to editing and distribution (Hart, 2012). It is used frequently in North America amongst enthusiasts to refer to photographic practices conducted on smartphones and using social media applications, and thus, holds the same or similar meaning to social media photography, above. Although I preferred this term initially, I have occasionally been misunderstanding when using it. This has been primarily due to the history of photography taking a “mobile” turn with the invention of the portable camera, (which could be stretched to incorporate consideration for instant cameras such as Polaroid’s and early cell phone photography practices). Therefore I have chosen sometimes to instead employ the following modified term (social/mobile photography) that speaks more directly to mobile photography practices as taking place on social media, while also recognizing their social nature as a centrally defining characteristic.

*Social/mobile photography* has its origins in the term mobile photography. Having originally preferred to use the term mobile photography myself, and experiencing misunderstanding outside of North America, I have come to employ the term social/mobile

photography near the conclusion of this thesis, as it references the practice as social in nature, and taking place on social media, (also described above.)

### **Social Media Photography Communitie(s) (SMPC or SMPCs)**

Social media photography communities are organized groups where mobile photographers and social media photographers share content online, usually through the use of a common hashtag. Location-based SMPCs frequently meet in their cities to do “photo walks.” **Instagramers** is an example of a popular worldwide social media photography community, which is organized regionally, according to city-specific and national chapters (i.e. Instagramers Montreal and Instagramers Japan)

### ***Her Mind’s Eye* (HME) (#hermindseye) (@inhermindseye)**

*Her Mind’s Eye* is the name of the social media photography/mobile photography community that I developed for this study. The group was further realized collectively alongside group members who were also research participants. *Her Mind’s Eye* has two chapters, one in Montreal, and one in Vancouver. The Montreal chapter is larger, and the Vancouver chapter operated mostly online.

### **Instagram**

Sometimes referred to as IG, though infrequently in this thesis, Instagram is a social media photography sharing platform owned by Facebook. Operating mostly on mobile devices such as smartphones, users can download the app, create an account, and begin taking and uploading pictures to a personal gallery. They can similarly view the photographs of their “followers” which are updated in real time in a scrolling interface similar to Facebook’s news feed. Instagram enables the use of hashtags to code and search for content.

### **Tag / Tagged**

Borrowing from Wikipedia: “a tag is a non-hierarchical keyword or term assigned to a piece of information (such as an Internet bookmark, digital image, or computer file). This kind of metadata helps describe an item and allows it to be found again by browsing or searching. Tags are generally chosen informally and personally by the item’s creator or by its viewer, depending on the system.” (From [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tag\\_\(metadata\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tag_(metadata)), 2016).

## Appendix D: VIPs – Significant Individuals

**VIPs - Significant Individuals****Hind Akhiyat – Mentor and Advisor**

The founder of Instagramers Montreal. I first met Hind as a burgeoning “Instagramer” participating in my first IGERS MTL meeting. Hind continued to become influential to my work during initial pilots exploring the nature (operations and philosophies) of SMPCs. In addition to becoming a friend and inspiration, Hind became a mentor who helped guide me through the development of *Her Mind’s Eye*.

***Her Mind’s Eye* Community members**

Each of the group members’ self-introductions, as well as a selection of her images, can be found in the *Description* section, under the heading *Exhibition Catalogue*.

<b><i>Her Mind’s Eye – Montreal</i></b>			
<i>Name</i>	<i>...on Instagram</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>...on Instagram</i>
<b>Marie Soliel Brosseau</b>	@solelidad	<b>Jodi Simms</b>	@joyjoyjodi
<b>Sarah Robinson</b>	@paddleOn	<b>Haley</b>	-----
<b>Marjolaine Bourget</b>	@marjobourge	<b>Joanna Holmes</b>	@a_tornado_named_joanna
<b>Lisa Langsetmo</b>	@LLangset	<b>Veronique Leduc</b>	@livenow
<b>Hind Akhiyat</b>	@vistavista	<b>Laura Rhodes</b>	@propelling381
-----	@elodielilysamuelle	<b>Laurel Hart</b>	@laurelhart

<b><i>Her Mind’s Eye – Vancouver (&amp;Toronto)</i></b>			
<i>Instagram Name (only)</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>...on Instagram</i>	
@MorningMango	<b>Marie-France Berard</b>		
@Hannah_nutwood	-----	-----	
@magyar_meringue	(Toronto)		
@sarasramblings	<b>Susan Rowe Harrison</b>	@lunule365	

## APPENDIX E: SMPC Leaders Interviewed

**SMPC Leaders Interviewed**

Although the scope of this research limited my ability to fully represent the knowledge I have gleaned from interviews with SMPC leaders during and following initial stages of my research, I would like to acknowledge these individuals here, as their insights served to influence my vision and understanding of *Her Mind's Eye* and SMPC photography as a whole. Whenever possible, I made an effort to directly reference individual members for their contributions, however generally speaking, through these interviews I recognized an overarching ethos of democratic creative community participation and network-building in urban centers. I hope to write a follow-up paper in which I can explore these interviews more in depth.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role / SMP Community / Organization</b>
Hind Akhiyat	Founder of Instagramers Montreal
@girloclock	Instagramers Vancouver
@Johnny777*	Organizing committee & representative of Mobile Walkers Japan (MWJP) and connected to IgersJP
@enzo*	Leader of Instagramers Japan
@atsuko12*	Instagramers Japan, Kyoto organizer
@gohyo & @kyoko*	Instagramers Japan organizing committee

\* Community leaders and mobile photography enthusiasts from Japan. Unfortunately due to dissertation length limitations, these interviews are not presented within this dissertation, however their insights were extremely instrumental in helping me to understand several overarching cultural elements to do with social media photography communities. I hope to publish more on this work in the near future.