Public Ephemera: A case study investigation

into individual learning experiences at

Nocturne: Art at Night.

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ABSTRACT

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Laura Carmichael

Temporary public art events modelled after the Nuit Blanche concept attract thousands of people to city centres in search of contemporary art. As a result, these mass cultural events may be dramatically changing how people interact with contemporary art. This qualitative research project utilizes Nocturne: Art at Night, a city wide, night time art event in Halifax, Nova Scotia, as a case study to determine the kinds of learning experiences everyday people have when they engage with art in the context of a temporary public art festival. This research identified factors that influence participants' understanding and appreciation of contemporary art.

Eleven participants without a Fine Arts background were interviewed before and after attending the event. Findings suggest that participants benefit greatly from being able to select which works to engage with and from having numerous and diverse projects to view. Artworks that build on participants' past experiences and knowledge of specific installation sites also positively impacted learning. The atmosphere and social aspects of participants' experiences such as interactions with peers and artists were seen as beneficial to participants' learning experiences. Short viewing times and lack of adequate signage or contextual information were found to be detrimental to participants' learning, leading to superficial experiences with art. This study determined that cultural events such as Nocturne provide attendees with a preliminary introduction to contemporary art. However, without additional resources, participants could formulate misconceptions about art that affect their understanding of particular artworks.

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Robert W. Carmichael,

in recognition of everything I learned from him.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1.   Nuit Blanche: An Introduction

The Nuit Blanche concept is a cultural phenomenon that is quickly spreading throughout the world (Scotiabank Nuit Blanche (SNB)[1], 2011). From dusk until dawn visual art, performances, and multimedia installations transform cities into outdoor exhibition spaces. These free, large-scale, city-wide art events ostensibly connect members of the public with the contemporary art world by making art accessible for thousands of citizens. As a result, these annual events may be dramatically altering how people interact with contemporary art in their cities.

The term "Nuit Blanche", or *Sleepless Night* (Scotiabank Nuit Blanche backgrounder, 2008), is believed to be a French translation and adaptation of the annual Russian phenomenon called *Beliye Nochi* (St. Petersburg, 2011; Paraszczuk, 2010). In the summer months in the northern city of St. Petersburg, the sun does not completely set. This leaves the city alive and active with people, culture, and festivals all night and day (Ballet and Opera, 2011).

In October 2002, Paris held the initial Nuit Blanche event. Under the direction of then Deputy Mayor, Christophe Girard (Nuit Blanche à Montréal, 2011), the cultural festival was coordinated by the appointed Jean Blaise. Blaise had previously developed similar multi-day events in Nantes (Nuit Blanche Paris, 2011). The all-night art festival

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[1] Scotiabank Nuit Blanche Toronto, 2011 citations will be abbreviated to SNB for all subsequent references.

has since spread to cities throughout the world, such as Madrid, Tokyo, Florence and 11 cities in the United Kingdom (SNB, 2011).

Canadian cities to host festivals modeled after Nuit Blanche include Montreal, Toronto, and Halifax (SNB, 2011). Translations of the name vary among cities (SNB, 2011). Nocturne: Art at Night is the name of the Halifax edition and is the focus of this study. For the purposes of this research, unless otherwise stated, I will refer to the concept of the event as a Nuit Blanche, which it is commonly referred to in Canadian cities such as Montreal and Toronto.

As a multi-disciplinary art event, Nuit Blanche showcases the art of local and international artists working in a variety of art forms. Visitors are encouraged to wander their city's streets as unconventional exhibition spaces become enlivened with art activity for this one night (Alves, 2007). With a vast and diverse assortment of programming offered throughout the all-night festival, visitors are free to select which projects, venues, and galleries they wish to engage.

1.1.1   Nuit Blanche: Aims.

The mandate of the Scotiabank Nuit Blanche in Toronto stipulates that the event is motivated to "make contemporary art accessible to large audiences, while inspiring dialogue and engaging the public to examine its significance and impact on public space" (Scotiabank Nuit Blanche, Backgrounder, 2008). Furthermore, these events are intended to be both "a 'high' art event and a free populous event" (Scotiabank Nuit Blanche, Backgrounder, 2008) with an aim of fostering community engagement.

Similar claims can be seen in European promotional texts (e.g. Light Night, Stoke on Trent, 2010; Nuit Blanche à Paris, 2010). The stated goal of these initiatives is to encourage its residents to collectively take a new viewpoint, and reconceptualise their city, through a celebration of their joint experiences and culture (Light Night, Stoke on Trent, 2010). Artworks are installed in fun, familiar, and unconventional exhibition spaces such as parking lots, city hall, churches, and shopping malls (SNB, 2011). Select sites, usually inaccessible to the public, are open for the night-time event (Scotiabank Nuit Blanche Backgrounder, 2008). In addition, various cultural institutions, be they public provincial galleries and museums or artist-run centres, remain open throughout the night, further encouraging contact with contemporary art (Scotiabank Nuit Blanche Backgrounder, 2008).

According to Banh (2009), through the transformation of public sites, Nuit Blanche creates a forum for discussing issues about the city and society, to be critically reflected on by a collectivity of urban citizens. The potential of these events to encourage dialogue and to bridge the gap between the art community and the public (Brault, 2010) may seem promising, but it raises questions about how such ideas can be realized and sustained. This is perhaps one of the many reasons why these types of events should be researched from various perspectives, and particularly from the perspective of art education.

1.1.2 Nuit Blanche in Canada.

In 2006, Toronto was the first city to initiate the event in North America (SNB backgrounder, 2008). Attendance at these events has been astounding, and increasing annually (Scotiabank Nuit Blanche Factsheet, 2010). Organizers of Toronto's inaugural

2006 Scotiabank Nuit Blanche expected approximately 250,000 people but were amazed

when preliminary attendance estimations hit 425,000 (Scotiabank Nuit Blanche, 2006).

These large-scale events draw thousands to city centres in search of contemporary art

(SNB, 2011). In effect, could Nuit Blanche potentially be creating new modes of

viewership, considering the large numbers of public in attendance engaging with art?

In an effort to make art accessible to a wide demographic, with varying

experiences in the arts, an assortment of resources is made available (SNB, 2011). These

tools are educational in nature, and facilitate orientation for attendees to more easily

navigate through the city and to engage with the artworks. Generally, most venues and

programmes waive admission fees. Museums and galleries tend to remain open all night

(SNB, 2011) and often offer additional programming for this one-night event (Nocturne

Halifax, 2011). Educational resources, similar to those employed in a gallery or museum

setting, are also made available to the public, (Nocturne Halifax, 2011; SNB, 2011). For

example, organizers of Toronto's Scotiabank Nuit Blanche install didactic panels to offer

more information at a selection of large installations. In addition, volunteer interpreters

were situated throughout the city to facilitate learning at specific projects (Banh, 2009).

Digital resources, including podcasts (Nocturne Halifax, 2011), iPhone map application

(SNB, 2011), and online supplementary information about projects, artists, and galleries

participating in the event (Nocturne Halifax, 2011), are made available to the public in

various cities. Special public transit options are often also offered in an attempt to make

the event accessible (Levin and Solga, 2009). Many considerations and efforts are made

to provide viewers with a variety of points of entry to the event.

1.1.3   Criticisms of Nuit Blanche.

It cannot be assumed, however, that Nuit Blanche is without criticism. Levin and Solga (2009) identified a key problem with large-scale, corporate sponsored cultural events exulting themselves over the landscape of the arts community. The problem the authors articulated is that citizens are led to believe that the exhibited artworks were conceived specifically for the event and brought to fruition by the presenting sponsor. Levin and Solga (2009) admit that Nuit Blanche initiatives have taken steps to make the event accessible to the public (i.e. waived admission fees and provided public transit options). However, they argued that these initiatives are not necessarily reflections of the local Toronto arts scene, nor do they highlight the specificities of the city itself. Levin and Solga (2009) explained that, despite the apparent democratization of culture, these initiatives may actually be further marginalizing select communities by masking the true inequalities that exist in the public realm. These statements raise important questions about who attends the events, and the accuracy of the publics' perception of an authentic representation of their cities and art communities.

Brown (2008) sees Toronto's Nuit Blanche as having the potential to become a disappointment to all those involved and questions its sustainability as an event. Brown writes;

> *"Those who attend for the art frequently complain that the work is too obvious, too spectacular and without lasting impact, while those who go looking for entertainment are faced with an abundance of the kind of opacity of meaning that art excels at…A unifying frustration lies in the work seeming to exist for someone else."* (p.9)

Perhaps, as Brown (2008) and Levin and Solga (2009) suggest, these big spectacles do not elicit the sense of community, wonderment, and exchange that is often projected by organizers, promoters, and curators.

A great deal of online critical discourse exists surrounding the overall quality and impact of the event. From their first-hand perspectives, the writers and art critics discuss the quality of the event and its probable impact on both the arts community and the visitors who attend, (e.g. Carson, 2010; Sandals, 2010; Fung, 2010). Some of the issues these and many other critics have discussed online relate to the overall scale, the problematic party atmosphere (Whyte, 2010), lack of efficient and affordable transportation options or sufficient street closers (Bettencourt-McCarthy, 2010; Whyte, 2010; Sandals, 2010), redundant, uninteresting, and uncritical art (Whyte, 2010; Fung, 2010), and the large crowds of people or line ups (Bettencourt McCarthy, 2010; Whyte, 2010; Harris, 2010). ArtsStars* takes a guerrilla journalist approach to criticising and exposing the ironies of the Toronto art scene by creating short video art criticisms for YouTube (ArtsStars* 2009). In 2009, they covered the ScotiaBank Nuit Blanche and highlighted the overindulgent and belligerent crowds that attend the late-night event, and their disregard for the art all together (ArtsStars*, 2009). Many of these authors do comment on the perspective of the viewer, further indicating the necessity of researching their view rather than making assumptions about the viewers' experiences with art.

1.2.   Nocturne: Art at Night

In 2008, I worked on a volunteer basis with other like-minded individuals to create a night time art opportunity, modelled after the Nuit Blanche concept, but that was more suited to the cultural climate of Halifax. We created the Nocturne: Art at Night Society,

an organization that works collaboratively with the arts community, municipal and provincial officials, local businesses, and corporate sponsors to create a grassroots event that represents and celebrates the arts community in Halifax (Nocturne Halifax, 2011). I held the position of Chair of the non-profit society for the initial two years.

Nocturne: Art at Night closely follows the model of other cities, but is modified to suit the physical and social qualities of Halifax. For example, Nocturne runs from 6:00 p.m. until midnight instead of all night (Nocturne Halifax, 2011). Although the streets and galleries of Halifax do not see the same density in attendance as larger cities like Toronto or Montreal, attendance to Nocturne continues to grow (Nocturne Halifax, 2011). Finally, as of Nocturne 2010, the event has not exhibited international artists like other Canadian Nuit Blanche events have to date. Currently, the event continues to grow and garner support from the arts community, the public, as well as municipal and provincial government (Nocturne Halifax, 2011).

The inaugural event took place October 18, 2008. The event was hugely successful as an estimated 5,000 people experienced Nocturne by visiting galleries or witnessing installations (Barnard, 2008). The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia exceeded its daily attendance record when close to 3,000 people visited during the six-hour event (Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 2011a).

The event has grown quickly, with approximately 9,000 attendees in 2009 (Dickinson, 2010). The 2010 edition hosted over 100 projects in public spaces and galleries (Nocturne, Halifax, 2011). Nocturne offers many of the same educational resources as other Nuit Blanche-style festivals, including detailed program guides, maps, and didactic panels in 2010, in addition to guided walking and bicycle tours in 2010,

podcasts in 2009, panel presentations in 2010, and shuttle bus services and public transit route information in 2008, 2009, and 2010.

At its essence, Nocturne is a community event, produced for and by members of the arts community in Halifax (Nocturne Halifax, 2011). The volunteer-run organization assists the arts community in the creation of an event that meets professional standards and is accessible to the public (Nocturne Halifax, 2011). Nocturne aims to create meaningful and inclusive opportunities with art through the collaboration and exhibition of contemporary art in public and private sites in Halifax (Nocturne Halifax, 2011). There are currently three cities in addition to Halifax in the Atlantic Provinces hosting similar style events inspired by Nuit Blanche/Nocturne model. These cities are Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Sydney, Nova Scotia and Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. (R. Zack, personal communication, January 7, 2011).

1.3.   Statement of Research Question

To my knowledge, no studies have been conducted that look at how festival-goers interact with the art at Nuit Blanche-style events. Nor have there been studies to show how these experiences may be beneficial or detrimental to their understanding of art, and contemporary art in particular, beyond the temporal or spatial limits of the festival. In this light, this research project aims to examine how people engage with art at these types of events. It critically examines the specific elements of these events that influence and shape an individual's learning experience with art. The research questions directing this program of study are:

- How do people learn from experiences with contemporary art at Nocturne: Art at Night?

- How do these encounters with art inform one's appreciation or understanding of contemporary art?

These two questions, along with a critical look at how we can begin to conceptualize a method for measuring the personal effects and impact of these expansive events are what propel this research project.

1.4. Justification

The Nuit Blanche phenomenon is a new and ephemeral form of mass culture that has seeped into our contemporary society. These increasingly popular spectacles are enticing the public to engage with art in ways that are worthy of investigation because of their potential to positively or negatively impact the public's learning experiences with art. Literature examining the value of these events (Alves, 2007; Banh, 2009; Jiwa, Coca-Stefaniak, Blackwell and Rahman, 2009;) suggests that members of the public greatly benefit from engaging with contemporary art in public spaces in their city by providing a fun and dynamic forum for discussing relevant issues. However, little research looks critically at the effects of these events on the individual learning experience. The presented research will contribute to a greater understanding of the implications of these events on an individual scale. In turn, it will critically determine the factors that facilitate or deter learning for event attendees.

Halifax is the ideal city in which to conduct this research for both geographical and social reasons. The downtown cores of the Halifax and Dartmouth regions are centrally located around the Halifax Harbour (figure 1); this renders most areas of the peninsula easily accessible by walking or public transit, making the Nocturne experience

a vast yet manageable event for attendees to see numerous projects in a variety of locations.

1.5.   Nocturne: Art at Night, 2010 Edition

In 2010, Nocturne occurred on Saturday, October 16. Attendance at the festival was greater than any of the previous years with estimates of 13,000 people (Nocturne: Art at Night society, 2010). Geographically, the festival was divided into five zones (figure 1). Nocturne is a city-wide festival but, due to the demographic concentration in the downtown Halifax/Dartmouth regions, the majority of the festival events were concentrated in those areas.

1.5.1. Programming.

The Nocturne 2010 event brought about many new features that were not available in previous years. Guided bicycle tours were a new addition to the program as well as musical performances on the ferry between Halifax and Dartmouth. Nocturne 2010 also introduced Anchor Projects throughout the city. These were curatorial projects featuring the work of artists exploring a shared theme or specific aspect of the environment in which their project was situated, such as the Halifax Public Gardens or South Waterfront area (Nocturne Halifax, 2011). In addition, there were a number of didactic panels installed at the sites of a selection of large scale projects, providing viewers with supplementary information on the work.

In 2010, Nocturne contained over 100 projects, including approximately 33 participating galleries, over 80 independent projects, and dozens of open businesses specifically contributing to the events of the evening (Nocturne, 2010).
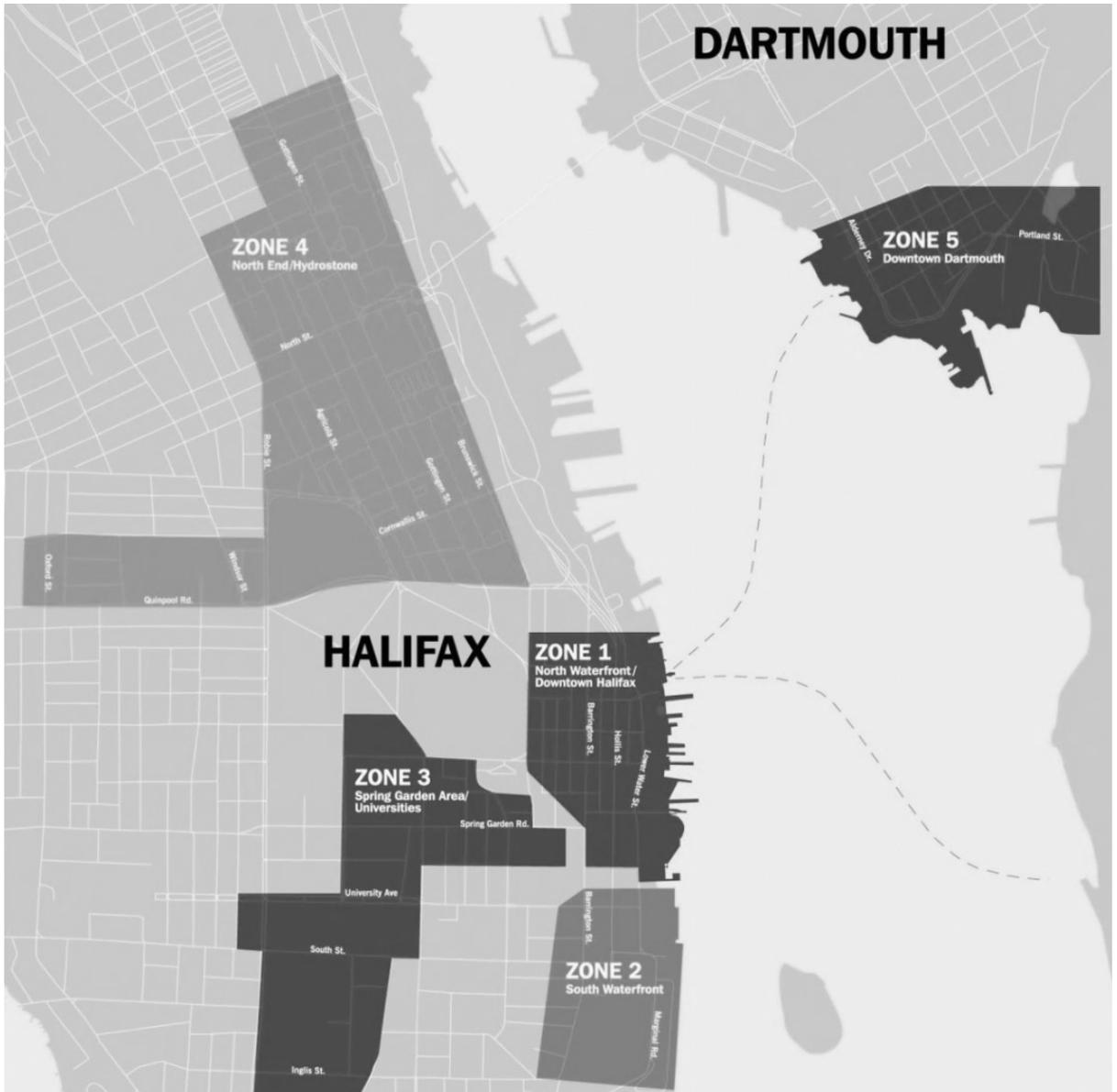
Figure 1: 2010 Nocturne Program Map illustrating five zones (Nocturne Halifax, 2011)

1.6.   Terms and Concepts

1.6.1. Contemporary art (modernism and postmodernism).

The term "contemporary" can simply be defined as art created by living artists or art created after 1970, and is not limited to specific periods or genres. Modernism, which is often confused with contemporary art (Mayer 2008), is defined by a series of schools and styles which embodied an approach predicated on notions of progress, experimentation, provocation, and pushing artistic conventions. Postmodernism developed as a critical response to the modernist ideologies, and interrogated assumptions of reason and certainty. In effect, the postmodern perspective asserted that doubt, obscurity and paradox may be possible and necessary (Art 21, 2011).

1.6.2. Public art.

In the most general sense, public art is art that is placed in or designed for a specific space, that is accessible and visible to the general public (Newport News Public Art Foundation, n.d.). Traditional public art, such as a monument or memorial, commonly commemorates, memorializes, or represents one particular person, group or history (Lacy, 1995). Select forms of contemporary public art, such as New Genre Public Art, use social interventions and collaboration to communicate relevant issues in the lives of people from diverse communities (Lacy, 1995). Public art can be ephemeral, dynamic, and evolving (Hein, H. 2006) and always relates to its place (Gerin and Maclean, 2009).

1.6.3. Site-specific art.

Site-specific art intrinsically connects the meaning of the artwork with the specific space in which it is exhibited (Kwon, 2002). It requires the viewer to perceptively and

physically make the association between the work and the space/location (Kwon, 2002). Site-specific work references the everyday world, and engages viewers in unconventional art spaces with issues not limited to the art world (Kwon, 2002). Site specific artworks directly respond to the physical, historical, and functional qualities of a place (Kwon, 2002).

1.6.4. Installation art.

Installation art is a contemporary art form that utilizes and responds to a physical space, such as in a gallery (Davies and Onorato, 1997) and highlights the relationship between the viewer and the artwork, the artwork and the space, and the space and the viewer (Reiss, 1999). Installation art often requires the presence of the viewer to complete the piece (Davies and Onorato, 1997). Installation art has been considered a more inclusive approach to making exhibitions. It has been seen as more collaborative and exploratory and, in turn, more socially democratic (Reiss, 1999).

1.6.5. Participatory art or socially collaborative art.

Participatory art is a genre that attempts to integrate art into daily life as a collaborative social experience, by challenging the traditional relationship between artists and viewers (Bishop, 2006). Participatory art stresses the value of the "collective dimension of social experience" (Bishop, 2006 p.10). Common themes found in participatory art practices include: empowering the viewer through the experience of the work; the artist relinquishing sole authorship of the work, (thus removing hierarchies); and renewing and generating social relationships deteriorated by capitalism (Bishop, 2006). The intention of participatory art is not simply to render the viewer active but to collaborate with the audience (Bishop, 2006).

This last section concludes my introduction to the research project on the temporary public art event, Nocturne: Art at Night and similar night-time events. In the next chapter, I will present literature that addresses the relationships between contemporary art, public art, and cultural events as possible forms of art education for members of the public.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Researching the effects of Nuit Blanche style events, such as Nocturne, requires a multifaceted approach to understanding the subject. The following chapter examines existing research on the Nuit Blanche event. In addition, I will conduct a discussion of current research on the topics of contemporary art and public art as they relate to art education and the public. Finally, I will present an outline of select writings relating to museum and gallery learning theories.

2.1.   Research on Nuit Blanche

The Nuit Blanche concept is a relatively recent development in contemporary society (SNB, 2011). Consequently, little qualitative research has been published that examines the event solely from the perspective of attendees.

There has been research completed on Nuit Blanche type events in Europe and on an international scale (e.g. Cherubini & Iasevoli, 2006; Jiwa, Coca-Stefaniak, Blackwell and Toyubur, 2009). Cherubini & Iasevoli, (2006) conducted research that developed a potential evaluation instrument to measure the social and economic impact of the Rome edition, *Notte Bianca,* from the perspective of various stakeholders. In 2009, a series of case studies examined the efficiency of the Nuit Blanche model in cities around the world to determine the feasibility of hosting similar events in the United Kingdom (Jiwa, et al. 2009). In addition, the Nuit Blanche model and concept is referenced in research initiatives that evaluate arts and culture policy and programs at provincial and national levels throughout Canada (e.g. Hill Strategies, 2008; Toronto Cultural Renaissance Backgrounder, 2007). The Arts Research Monitor, produced by Hill Strategies Research Inc., an arts and culture research organization, reported on the 2007 Visual Arts Summit.

The report indicated that "Nuit Blanche [Toronto] proved that the public is interested in contemporary art. However, there is still a need to transcend the general perception that contemporary art is intimidating" (p.4, Hill Strategies, 2008).

2.1.1. Figures: Attendance, production costs, and economic impact.

ScotiaBank Nuit Blanche in Toronto made available a 2010 Fact Sheet (SNB, 2011). This provided highlights on the number of people in attendance and the economic impact of the event from the last four years. The inaugural event in 2006 saw 425,000 people in attendance with $ 1,000,000 in economic impact (SNB, 2011). By 2009, the number of participating artists and independent projects had increased significantly and attendance reached 1 million. As a result, the predicted economic impact was an estimated $ 18.5 million. These statistics provided by Scotiabank Nuit Blanche paint a picture of the growing scale of the event in Toronto and the potential impact it has on the city, the arts community, and consequently the residents.

In Rome, the 2005 edition of *Notte Bianca* cost approximately 3 million euros to produce and generated 30 million euros in revenue (Cherbubini and Iasevoli, 2006). The Toronto Nuit Blanche event, which is produced by Toronto Special Events (TSE), spent $1,121,000 in expenditures for the initial event in 2006. The distribution of received funding that year was divided as follows; $ 621,000 from the city of Toronto, $ 100, 000 from tourism Toronto and $ 400, 000 from sponsorship, (Robinson, 2008). These figures illustrate that a fairly significant portion of revenue is public funding, used to create and promote the event. Nocturne: Art at Night in Halifax in 2010 received approximately 60% of its revenue from public grants and funding at both provincial and municipal

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levels (Nocturne: Art at night society, 2010). These figures further elucidate the importance of researching events such as Nuit Blanche and Nocturne to reveal both the longevity and impact that these extremely temporary events may have on members of the public.

2.2.   Art Events, Civic Regeneration and Place Identity

Despite there being little qualitative research conducted on the experiential aspects of the Nuit Blanche concept, there is a growing body of literature being generated from disciplines such as planning and place management (Alves, 2007; Jiwa, Coca-Stefanik, Blackwell, and Toyubur, 2009), and curatorial and cultural studies (Banh, 2009; Levin and Solga, 2009) that explore the impact of these types of initiatives on urban re-generation, cities, and communities.

Jiwa et al.'s (2009) study on the Nuit Blanche model around the world revealed the contributing factors of such events that lead to the development and maintenance of strong communities and cities. These factors included engaging citizens in opportunities that celebrate their city and their shared heritage, offering empowerment through art, and building a sense a community. This study highlighted these international events, in reference to the social and economic benefits, as large-scale cultural entities that can contribute to a sense of place identity, yet it does not explicitly illustrate how these outcomes are achieved.

Alves (2007) proposed using the concept of light as a metaphor and as an actual tool to shift how citizens and politicians consider their cities. Through encounters with cultural activities that utilize light, such as artworks at Nuit Blanche, public spaces

become sites of improvement for the lives of citizens. These sites become places where their shared collective experiences can be articulated. Alves suggests "focusing on the city as a place of exchange that embraces new forms of institutional interaction and unconstrained relationships between citizens" (p.1250). Cultural initiatives that use light and light based art projects, according to Alves, encourage citizens to perceive places in their city in a new light and to potentially conceptualize alternative purposes and uses for these spaces. The study provided examples of artworks, festivals, and initiatives from various cities to illustrate programs that encourage the public to reimagine their city. However, it does not account for the perspectives of citizens once the artworks are installed, exhibited, and when necessary, dismantled after the event.

Although these studies provide a greater understanding of the expansive nature of the Nuit Blanche festival in terms of attendance numbers, social and economic impact, and community and civic development (e.g. Cherubini & Iasevoli, 2006; Alves, 2007; Jiwa, et al, 2009), they do not determine the potential effects these events have on individual perceptions and understandings of contemporary art.

Studying civic festivals sheds light on how these events can invite citizens to become more aware of their surroundings and fellow community members (Alves, 2007; Jiwa et al., 2009; Banh, 2009). Banh (2009) took a critical look at the Nuit Blanche event as a contributing component in the "Creative City[2]" discourse, emerging out of Toronto's recent cultural plan. In an effort to appear more culturally enticing, and thus more economically attractive on the world stage, cities are employing several branding

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[2] The Creative City concept was developed by Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini. It is a strategy for hypothesizing and solving urban issues using creativity and creative solutions as a framework (Banh, 2009).

strategies to appeal to various demographics (Banh, 2009). Banh (2009) wrote "[culture] is a constantly contested realm, which makes it an ideal staging ground for speaking about the people, spaces, and institutions that constitute a city" (p. 4). According to Banh (2009), Nuit Blanche provides a forum for diverse publics to discuss and challenge relevant issues relating to urban living and idyllic notions of the *creative city*.

Banh (2009) claims that Nuit Blanche must not be regarded as merely as an impressive but temporary event that fulfills another approach in Toronto's branding strategy. Rather, he sees the urban festival as a catalyst in social change because the festival format commands the presence of people and creates a space in which ideas can be articulated and meanings shared through the exhibition of contemporary art works. Banh (2009) explains that the curator has a responsibility "to shape the conversation not only in regard to the "perception of contemporary art," but also in relation to the present condition of the public sphere" (p.7). To do this, the art should not be "high" art made available to an ambivalent public. More accurately, he argues that the art must be relevant and understandable to the audience, in order to strengthen and invigorate the public sphere. Banh (2009) adds that the event must maintain a critical dialogue after the time of the festival, otherwise it runs the risk of simply being a "festive escapade" (p. 8). Therefore, according to Banh, the solution rests in the publics' ability "to apprehend and understand what the artists are doing within the broader societal context that informs the making and the doing" (p. 8-9). He admits that steps are taken to facilitate learning and meaning making (such as placing interpreters and didactic panels near key projects), but argues that critical reflection is necessary after the event. From Banh's perspective, this will allow multiple interpretations to emerge through thoughtful discussions about the

meaning of the works. Otherwise, visitors may simply accept the works as contemporary art, without questioning it. Therefore it is this dialogue and critical thinking that will inevitably improve the public sphere according to Banh.

The foreseeable problem with Banh's (2009) comments is that artists, curators, and event organizers think that by simply getting people together to look at art collectively, implies that audience members are speaking critically about the works, leading to the automatic creation of a new audience, with changed perceptions about contemporary art. Banh (2009) admits that these may be ambitious goals, but states that, "when contemporary art is produced in the context of an urban festival, with the spaces of the city as the site of its presentation, the works created enter the realm of contemporary public art" (p. 7). The same problem can be seen to exist in the realm of public art. The notion being that if institutions place art in public spaces people will somehow miraculously understand it. As Lachapelle, (2010) stated, this wrongly "assumes that the art object itself is somehow capable of taking on an educational role" (p.143). It appears that in a similar vein, Banh (2009) assumes that simply bringing both the art and the attending public together will spontaneously lead to new forms of understanding.

Banh (2009) clearly presents a situation in which Nuit Blanche acts as a promising and influential force in improving the quality of a city through the active, participation of its citizens in thought provoking, critical discourse about culturally relevant artworks. The difficultly however is that there is no method in place for determining whether these conversations and exchanges are taking place. The literature suggests that the rhetoric surrounding the educational benefits of Nuit Blanch advocates that the viewer automatically internalizes and comprehends the messages, ideas, and

concepts that artists and curators present in the context of these events. The intention of this research project is not to determine which messages about urban living are discussed among viewers. This research looks at who is at the receiving side of this experience, what they are taking away from the experience, and what implications these experiences have on the viewer in the form of art education and appreciation.

2.3. Contemporary Art

Nuit Blanche endeavours to convey contemporary art to the masses in fun and accessible ways in public spaces (SNB backgrounder, 2008). The messages communicated by such events suggest that contemporary art is often inaccessible to the general public. Brault (2010) admits that there is a gap between the art world and the general public. Wolcott (1996) offers a thorough account of the challenges associated with interpreting and understanding contemporary art. Her account defined a selection of contributing factors that could be attributed to the creation and perpetuation of a 'gap' between the public and the art world. To Wolcott (1996), a distinction resides in the paradigm shift between modernist principles of art appreciation to postmodernist thinking about art, society, and culture.

Wolcott (1996) explained that modernism was premised on ideals that favoured compositional and formal elements in art making. Many of these principles were self-referential in terms of the art making process and the art object. Art was considered an expression of the individualized artist, dissociated from the concerns of society (Desai, 2002). In most instances, an exploration of form was privileged over content (Wolcott, 1996). Evaluating and judging art was based on formal criteria (Wolcott, 1996). These

criteria, to a certain degree, were fairly understandable to the public and were premised on coherent ideas of an aesthetic experience (Wolcott, 1996).

With the emergence of the postmodern perspective, practices in the art world have become multidimensional, politically provocative, and socially relevant to the events and cultural contexts in which the artwork was produced (Wolcott, 1996). Artists began utilizing different styles, such as pastiche, kitsch, repetition and appropriation and adopting multiple perspectives (Wolcott, 1996). In turn, these new techniques and approaches to art making challenged long held artistic convections about formalism, sole author, authority, and viewership (Bishop, 2006). Desai (2002) explained that the art produced as a derivative of the minimalist period from the 1960's, "deliberately dismantled the longstanding separation between the art object and society" (Desai, 2002, p. 308). As a result, modernist criteria were difficult to apply to contemporary art (Wolcott, 1996).

Artists' creations challenged and piqued the viewer's personal ideals, beliefs and understandings and rendered them uncomfortable (Mayer, 2008; Erikson & Villeneuve, 2008). Artists began working with new artistic forms such as conceptual art, performance art, and installation art and using untraditional supplies. Often, artists practiced with a "professional aesthetic" that was unknown to most people beyond the limits of the art world (Lachapelle, 2003). Consequently, viewers became more uncertain about how to interpret and make meaning of contemporary art (Erickson and Villeneuve, 2008). Erickson and Villeneuve (2008) claimed that people simply do not possess the skills or knowledge about art to comprehend the often challenging and evolving trends in contemporary art. They claimed that education is a huge factor in bridging the gap

between the art world and the public. Wolcott also contended for a postmodern art education in which the artworks were examined critically and situated within the social, political, institutional, and culture contexts in which they were created.

As artists diverged from modernists ideals and adopted a postmodern perspective, efforts were made to integrate the viewer into the art experience (Bishop, 2006). This can be seen in the evolution of installation art from the 1950's and 1960's (Reiss, 1999). Artists began critiquing the political position and role of the gallery and large institutions (Reiss, 1999). Artists no longer worked in isolation, but adopted the role of the artist as initiator or facilitator within the work, (Desai, 2002; Kwon 2002; Bishop, 2006; Lacy, 1991). The function of the viewer changed from passive recipient to active collaborator, (Reiss, 1999; Bishop, 2006). As a final point, artworks were no longer limited to the confines of galleries but moved into the public realm to be more socially relevant, as artists began collaborating in hospitals, parks, and community orientated institutions (Desai, 2002). The value of the work was placed on the experiential and collective benefits rather than the production of a traditional art object (Desai, 2002).

Recent studies in art education looked at viewership in relation to contemporary art (Lachapelle, Douesnard, and Keenlyside, 2009; Douesnard, 2005; Krstich, 2003). For example, Douesnard (2005) and Krstich (2003) considered the physical affects that influence visitors' interpretations and understandings of contemporary art. The participants in these studies had varying levels of experience with art and engaged with installation art in outdoor settings and museums (respectively). Douesnard (2005) found that non-expert art participants' pre-established notions and expectations of art affect their appreciation of contemporary art. However, the pedagogical approaches provided by

the artist examined in the study, and multiple points of entry into the work, were among the contributing factors that facilitated the non-expert viewers' appreciation of contemporary art in the study. Krstich's (2003) study indicated that regardless of past experience with art, the participants in her study experienced unease interacting with the installation. Lack of social mediation from other visitors and the pressures of gallery conventions were seen as factors that contributed to viewer uncertainty.

Lachapelle, Douesnard, and Keenlyside, (2009) observed the effects of longer viewing duration on the interpretations and verbal responses of non-expert art viewers to contemporary public art in an outdoor sculpture garden. Participants were asked to engage in two activities. In the first, participants were asked to select any number of artworks and to speak about them as they looked for 10 minutes. The second activity involved having the participants select one work and reflect for five minutes before discussing it for another five minutes. This study found that respondents performed significantly better when given additional time to view and respond to a single work rather than speaking briefly about many works. This suggested that hasty viewing experiences may be detrimental to the learning process. The study also found that viewers perform best when they have the ability to decide which works to reflect upon, when they take at least five minutes to examine the work thoughtfully, and when supplementary information is made available to them (Lachapelle, 2003).

The aforementioned studies are significant, as they shed light onto the viewing habits and ideas held by the general public with varying levels of experience with art. The studies provide insight into participants' perceptions and expectations of art both during and following the time of the participants' experience with art. However, they do not look

at participant responses to contemporary art in the context of a temporary city wide art festival.

2.4.   Public Art

Similar perceptions are seen to be held by the general public when it comes to interpreting and understanding the significance of public art (Lachapelle, 2003; 2010; Senie, 2003). Public art is often seen as controversial (Lachapelle, 2003). Yet, there are many arguments that exist for the necessity and benefits of public art in cities, (Hein, H., 2006; Lacy, 1991; Gerin & Maclean, 2009). There remains a persistent question that Lachapelle (2003) poses in relation to public art; "can simply exposing the public to contemporary art constitute in itself a positive and formative experience?" (p. 66). The artworks featured at Nuit Blanche and Nocturne are certainly not forms of permanent public art. Their ephemerality as artworks are defined to the temporal and spatial limits of the festival. Nonetheless, artworks at Nocturne can be conceived of as a form of public art because they take the audience and location into consideration (Gerin & Maclean, 2009; Hein, H., 2006) and because of the discourse it enables through its exhibition in public spaces (Banh, 2009). Nonetheless, this research reiterates the question above, is the simple exposure to contemporary art at night time art festivals enough to provide meaningful experiences with art?

Using four of Fraser's (1993) provocative ideas of the public sphere, Lachapelle (2010) discusses four assumptions regarding the concept of the *public* as it relates to public art. He states that the relationship between the artist and viewers is an unequal one, as the viewer is rarely a consideration in the conception of the artwork. The participation of the viewer is restricted to the final stages of production, once the work is completed or

installed. In addition, Lachapelle (2010) reminds us that the public does not consist of one unanimous, agreeing body. As such, it is important for artists and administrators to have an understanding of the specific audience for whom the work is intended in order for the artwork to be effective. Another assumption he explores is associated with the notion that art is perceived as 'good' and is therefore a universal language. The problem with this belief is the fact that art must be decoded in order for the public to comprehend and engage with it. Finally, he asserts that members of the public rarely contribute to the decision-making process to produce particular works of art. Generally, the process of selection is left to art professionals with ample experience and knowledge of the art world. As a result, the general public and the art professionals have varying perspectives on the subject (Lachapelle, 2010). The aforementioned research outlines selected assumptions about art in the public arena. Likewise, it could also highlight the publics' perceptions of and involvement with contemporary art in general.

2.5. Museums and Gallery Education

Drawing from museum education can provide a wealth of information about the complexities of the art viewing experience, whether within the physical setting of a museum[3] or in the outdoor context of a public art event. This study will extract from bodies of literature derived from museum studies and learning theories that, in particular, utilize constructivist approaches to museum education.

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[3] Throughout the text, I use the words gallery and museum interchangeably. "Museums are institutions created in the public interest. They engage their visitors, foster deeper understanding and promote the enjoyment and sharing of authentic cultural and natural heritage. Museums acquire, preserve, research, interpret and exhibit the tangible and intangible evidence of society and nature. As educational institutions, museums provide a physical forum for critical inquiry and investigation." (Canadian Museums Association, 2011).

2.5.1. Special events as education.

In an effort to counter the public perception that museums are exclusive and socially

irrelevant institutions (Axelsen, 2006, a), gallery educators and curators have struggled to

increase and diversify new audiences to museums and galleries (Williams, 1996). Since

the 1970's museums in North America were expected to demonstrate that public funds

were used "efficiently, effectively and economically" (Scott and Soren, 2009, p. 190).

Galleries and museums have since offered a variety of special and educational events and

programs in an attempt to promote the gallery as an educationally valuable, yet

accessible, fun, and welcoming entity (Axelsen, 2006b). By hosting special events

designed for specific demographics (Coffee, 2007), the intention is to increase gallery

attendance by changing the public perception of galleries (Axelsen, 2006a).

Axelsens' (2006, a & b) studies looked at visitor perceptions of special events

offered by museums and what motivates visitors to attend specially programmed events.

The research aimed to determine visitor perceptions in order to assess the effects of

special gallery programming. She explained that what is necessary for a special event "is

the provision of enough activities for the event to take on appropriate "critical mass" to

have appeal, to be offered for a limited time, and to be positioned as "outside of the

ordinary" (2006 b p.25). Clearly Nuit Blanche in itself has reached this critical mass,

offering numerous, exceptional projects in a limited amount of time. Likewise,

participating galleries also offer special events and programs during Nuit Blanche and

Nocturne (SNB, 2010; Nocturne, 2010) which could potentially alter the public's

perception of galleries and the arts community. Axelsen (2006 b) found that museum

visitors are most often motivated to attend special events for personal reasons such as

"learning and education; novelty; and previous experiences" (p. 212, 2006 b), for social motivations relating to group learning and social interactions, and finally for the atmosphere shaped by the physical context of special events (2006 b) These studies took the visitors' impressions into consideration, but they did not look at the perceptions of the public who may not already be part of the museum community.

2.5.2. Learning and constructivism.

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council in the UK defined learning as "a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve the development or deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, values, ideas and feelings. Effective learning leads to change, development, and the desire to learn more" (Museums, Libraries and Archives council, 2011). Furthermore, Lankford (2002) explained that learning in constructivist museums can be "generally understood as a complex, nonlinear, active process in which individuals draw upon previous knowledge and experiences and apply these to their interpretation and understanding of present circumstances," (p. 144). These definitions of learning situate the learner, and their experiences, at the heart of the meaning making process.

As we look to museum education for theories on learning, we see many relevant connections that will help to determine what aspects of learning occur in settings beyond the walls of the museum. While museums and Nuit Blanche events maintain very different mandates, the constructivist paradigm is ideal for conceptualizing meaning making in the context of an art event. The constructivist perspective asserts the centrality of the person in the learning process in the museum (Mayer, 2005, a), as opposed to models such as the transmission model which perceives people as "empty vessels waiting

to be filled with information or knowledge" (Mason, 2005, p. 201). Therefore what meaning visitors make of their experiences with art depends less on what the museum educator intends and more on visitors' past experiences (Lankford, 2002; Mayer, 2005 b; Falk and Dierking and Adams 2003; Falk and Dierking, 2000).

According to George E. Hein, (1998) two elements are necessary for learning to occur from the constructivist perspective. The first is that the learner must be actively engaged in the learning situation. The second aspect of the learning experience necessitates that the learner derive meaning that need not be validated or confirmed by standards outside of the learning experience itself, such as art history, (Mayer, 2005 b). George E. Hein, (1998) explained that "validity arises from the value of the concepts in leading to action (use) and in the consistency of the ideas one with another" (p. 34). From this, a constructivist learning situation would be active, providing many access points that encourages experimentation and draws personal conclusions (Hein, G.E., 1998).

Learning is heavily impacted by "physical settings, social interactions, and personal beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes (Falk and Dierking, 1992, p. 99). As such, learning is not simply the acquisition of new facts or information. Rather, learning also includes "changes in attitudes, aesthetic appreciation, and family communication" (Falk and Dierking, p. 3, 2000). In addition, they stated that "most human learning is self-motivated, emotionally satisfying, and very personally rewarding" (Falk and Dierking, 2000, p. 18). Falk and Dierking (2000) described the findings of many psychological and sociological researchers who have discovered that people are most likely to learn when learning takes place in supportive circumstances. People also learn best when they are interacting in meaningful ways, free from added stress or insecurities, when they have the

freedom to select and control what they engage with and finally, when aspects of the activity are well suited to the learners abilities. When the above elements are present, learning is more enjoyable, and happens with fewer challenges (Falk and Dierking, 2000). Expanding the definition of learning to be more inclusive as well as the scope of where and how it occurs suggests that the conditions of Nocturne may create favourable learning situations for the attendees based on the criteria mentioned above.

2.5.3. Learning inside and outside the museum.

Free choice institutions, such as museums, allow the learner to visit and look at their own speed and discretion, without the strain imposed by formal assessment such as in schools (Lankford, 2002; Axelsen, 2006 a). According to Falk and Dierking (2000), free choice learning is nonlinear and an important element in the learning process because it allows the learner to select what, when, and where they decide to learn and with what degree of difficulty (p.13).

Historically, measuring and assessing learning has been a challenge in museum and gallery situations (Falk and Dierking, 2000). To mitigate the difficulties associated with trying to measure the impact on gallery visits, Falk and Dierking (2000) developed the *Contextual Model of Learning* to account for the complex and various ways visitors interact with the museum and its objects.

The *Contextual Model of Learning* is intended to break down the complexities of learning by focusing on three aspects of the visitor's experience at museums or in free-choice learning situations. These aspects include the personal context; the sociocultural context; and the physical context. Each of these three contexts is interdependent, deeply

connected and always present in the museum visiting experience (Falk and Dierking, 2000, p. 13).

2.5.3.1. Personal context.

The personal context accounts for the components of the individuals' museum experience that influence learning. It encompasses their reasons for wanting to attend a museum, their expectations of the visit, any prior knowledge or experience they hold, and their interests, beliefs, attitude, and ideas (Falk and Dierking, 2000 p.16). Generally, most individuals learn best when they are interested in the subject at hand (Falk and Dierking, 1992). These factors inform what ideas, artworks, or objects visitors may engage with and what meaning an individual will draw from such experiences.

For learning to occur, an individual must be motivated and have an interest to engage in an activity that they believe will be informative, "emotionally satisfying, and very personally rewarding" (Falk and Dierking, 2000, p.18). These authors distinguished between two types of motivation; *intrinsic & extrinsic motivation* which helps to predict the quality and effects of learning. Falk and Dierking (2000) explained that when learners are intrinsically motivated to learn it is for reasons that are inherent in the activity itself. The activity is enjoyed for the challenge or pleasure the act brings to the individual. This form of motivation is personally satisfying and suggests that greater learning may occur (Falk and Dierking, 2000, p.19). However, when an individual anticipates a reward, such as payment for the act, the quality of learning tends to decrease because the individual is doing it for reasons other than the pure satisfaction of that activity.

Visitor expectations are formed from the combination of an individual's "motivations, interests, and prior museum experiences" (Falk and Dierking, p. 76, 2000). Understanding the role of expectations in learning provides insight into how individuals anticipate museums will meet their needs as well as how they perceive the purpose of museums (Falk and Dierking, 2000).

Falk and Dierking (2000) explained that "a person's ability to learn is constructed from a base of prior experiences" (p. 26). According to Koroscik, (1996) a foundation of prior knowledge is not only necessary for understanding works of art, but is also a reflection of what an individual is aware of. She referred to this as the knowledge base, "this facet of cognition includes all of the knowledge, skill, and experience the individual has previously acquired" (p. 8). Understanding aspects of an individuals' knowledge will assist in determining the nature of their learning experience.

If a subject is not already of interest to the individual, then past experiences in the form of memories may remain dormant until triggered to form new memories, understanding, and learning (Falk and Dierking, 2000). As Falk and Dierking describe, previous knowledge plays a significant role, "learning requires building upon prior knowledge with additional information and experiences" (Falk and Dierking, 2000, p. 27). By this logic, memory also plays an integral role in the learning process. New encounters create new memories that are shaped and informed by previously held memories, which subsequently lead to learning. This is a continuous and dynamic process of meaning making which is always changing and is cumulative overtime, (Falk and Dierking, 2000). As such, the ability to retrieve and transfer "information to solve

problems, answer questions, recount a story" (Falk and Dierking, 1992, p. 108) is

necessary for effective learning.

In addition, choice and control play a large part in what and how an individual

learns within the personal context. Choice and control renders the individual responsible

for selecting what and how to engage within an encounter and gives him or her

ownership over his or her own learning experience (Falk and Dierking, 2000, pp. 84-85).

2.5.3.2. Social context.

The sociocultural context accounts for aspects of the visitors museum experience that

include who the visitor attends with, how they interact with their companions, how

meaning is shared among them, and how they relate to strangers or museum staff at the

time of their visit (Falk and Dierking, 2000, p.91). The sociocultural context elaborates

on these elements that affect learning from a societal perspective. As human beings, we

collectively contextualize our world from interactions and conversations with each other

(Coffee, 2007). Therefore learning occurs on an individual level and among groups.

How and what is learned is deeply connected to the socio-cultural context within which it

occurs (Falk and Dierking, 2000). "The museum is a profoundly social experience"

(Lankford, 2002, p. 384), whether we interact with other people or not because it is a

socio-cultural institution (Lankford, 2002). Falk and Dierking (2000) stated that all

experiences and interactions with media (books, objects, exhibitions, etc.) are deeply

entrenched and facilitated through social and cultural contexts.

Individuals create and find meaning from encounters with companions or museum

staff (Falk and Dierking, 2000). Attending museums with family members or friends

encourages multiple interpretations of works to evolve and be shared among the group. Falk and Dierking (2000) presented developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky's theoretical framework for comprehending how the social realm mediates cognition. Within Vygotsky's (1978) framework, group members often look to the more experienced and knowledgeable members to gain support and direction in situations that require learning a concept or problem solving. This is referred to as "scaffolding" and can manifest itself through the act of asking questions or providing cues to facilitate learning among the group (Falk and Dierking, 2000, pp. 44-45). Communication between group members allows for an exchange of ideas, interpretations, and storytelling to occur (Falk and Dierking, 2000). Also, attending galleries with friends, peers or in groups strengthens social connections and emphasizes common beliefs (Falk and Dierking, 2000). It is through the shared social experiences that differences and contradictory perspectives emerge as well (Lankford, 2002).

Interactions with strangers also provide rich and meaningful experiences for individuals because they inform how and what people engage with (Falk and Dierking, 2000). These authors explained the concept of *modelling,* as it relates to museum experiences. Modelling is a process whereby the learner notes and emulates the behaviour of other visitors to acquire information or knowledge (Falk and Dierking, 2000, pp.49 - 50). Museum and gallery staff, be they interpreters, volunteers, docents or guides also facilitate the learning experience for individuals (Falk and Dierking, 2000).

2.5.3.3. Physical context.

The physical context accounts for people's encounters with the physical qualities of the space or building, the ways in which people make sense of the physical environment, and how design principals and post-museum visit experiences inform learning (Falk and Dierking, 2000). The physical aspects of a building or space play a significant role in the learning process because "the ability to learn- is strongly dependent upon individuals' ability to frame prior experiences within the context of their physical setting" (Falk and Dierking, 2000, p.54).

A component of the physical context describes our ability to make sense of places through our understanding of how to behave in such places (Falk and Dierking, 2000). For example, if each time we entered a library, we needed to be reminded of how to behave, we would rarely learn anything new because our efforts would be directed to re-familiarizing ourselves with the rules of behaviour in that context (Falk and Dierking, 2000, p.55). The same can be said for attending a gallery or museum. For people who rarely visit galleries, the initial experience can be taxing (Falk and Dierking, 2000). Visitors often require a period of time and access to resources to orient themselves before entering the museum, particularly if they are not already familiar with the space. Falk and Dierking (2000) described *advance organizers* (like maps) as spatial and conceptual tools that facilitate the learning process by reducing the amount of uncertainty and stress imposed on the visitor (p.117).

Memory and the physical context are closely related, and more often, individuals can easily remember things based on the physical qualities of the event (Falk and Dierking, 2000). Skills and ideas learned in one setting are not necessarily easily

reassigned to subsequent situations (Falk and Dierking, 2000). Therefore, Falk and Dierking proposed that the presence of elements from the original situation be present in subsequent situations to assist with the transfer of knowledge and learning (pp. 59-60).

Although navigating and orienting one's self in a new place can be challenging, elements of novelty have proven to be an enhancement to learning (Falk and Dierking, 2000, pp.114-116). Novel situations that differ slightly from the familiar require that the viewer be more perceptually attuned to their surroundings because it requires the attention of the viewer (Falk and Dierking, 2000). Novelty makes the situation a little different and therefore interesting; it cannot however be to the degree that it is detrimental to the quality of the experience (Falk and Dierking, 2000). Also, curiosity is closely linked to notions of novelty (p.115). Curiosity is the way someone responds to novel stimuli (Falk and Dierking, 2000). Therefore spaces or events that possess an element of mystic or unknown can encourage exploration and discovery (Falk and Dierking, 2000)

Learning does not conclude once a visitor has left the museum (Falk and Dierking, 2000). In fact, a great deal of learning occurs in the days and months, even years after the initial museum visit (Falk and Dierking, 2000). Reinforcing events following the visit are a crucial component in the learning process because learning is incremental and lasts over time. It reinforces what was learned by reinforcing memories and existing knowledge (Falk and Dierking, 2000, pp. 128-129).

Design elements of an exhibition or space also affect learning within the physical context (Falk and Dierking, 2000). Design elements could relate to the exhibition or

gallery itself and could include principles such as colour, form, text and conceptual groupings. These principles allow viewers to more easily and more deeply engage with objects and to draw larger comparisons between organized concepts within the exhibition itself. This ability to relate and group objects and ideas is what Falk and Dierking (2000) referred to as "chunking information" (pp.119-120). Generally, chunking is a strategy employed by expert viewers, who are able to identify and organize multiple objects or information more quickly by clumping ideas together. More experienced viewers are capable of perceiving and interpreting a great deal of information with little exertion (Falk and Dierking, 1992).

Clearly, all three contexts within the *Contextual Model of Learning* are heavily interrelated. Elements of each context are present in all three contexts. Falk and Dierking (2000) suggested that one could consider "the personal context as moving through time; as it travels, it is constantly shaped and reshaped as it experiences events with the physical context, all of which are mediated by and through the sociocultural context" (p.11). The contextual model attempts to itemize the individual museum experience, and see how relationships between the individual, their peers, and the physical environment are expressed. The contextual model can be helpful for dissecting the intricacies of the Nocturne experience.

Finally, from Elizabeth Ellsworth's (2005) epistemological perspective, knowledge is not a destination that is arrived at, but rather it is something that is always an active process. Ellsworth argues that learning is an embodied experience that happens through our movement and interaction in the world. The *learning self* is the active process of making sense and is something that is very much connected with sensation and

feeling, for it is "the *lived experience* of our learning selves that make the thing we call knowledge" (p. 1).

Similar to the physical context, Ellsworth (2005) argued that specific places possess pedagogical forces that prompt and cause learning. The places she exemplified are predominantly exhibitions, installations, or site specific performances that use design principles to control the physical and conceptual perceptions of space, time, movement, imagination, etc. By eliciting new ideas to the viewer, these places render the viewer more attuned to themselves, to their environment, and thus have pedagogical potential (pp. 10-11, 16-17)

Ellsworth (2005) explained that experiences with these types of places provoke the learning self, because they allow novel ideas and feelings to transpire. Referring to the learner, Ellsworth explains that "upon encountering something outside herself and her own ways of thinking, [the learner] is giving up thoughts she previously held as *known,* and as a consequence she is parting with a bit of her known self" (p. 16). As the student sheds one aspect of herself, new concepts manifest themselves and the process of becoming takes shape and learning occurs. The principles Ellsworth (2005) presented through her investigation of places of learning has provided a theoretical framework for envisioning how viewers may concurrently relate themselves to their world as they move thru and interact with art installations.

Ellsworth's (2005) theories conclude this chapter on current literature regarding contemporary art, public art, and gallery education and learning theories. The following chapter outlines the methodology and procedures employed in this research project.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

3.1. Research Design

To gain insight into how people engage with contemporary art in the context of a temporary public art festival, this research project uses Nocturne: Art at Night, 2010, in Halifax, Nova Scotia as a case study. Eleven individuals who attended the event were interviewed before and after their experiences at Nocturne. Photographs created by the participants were utilized as one of the methods of data collection to develop an in-depth understanding of the experience of Nocturne from the attendees' perspective.

3.2. Pilot Project

In preparation for this current research project, a pilot project was carried out in February 2009 (Carmichael, 2010). The project tested the procedures used in this study and helped gain a preliminary understanding of potential outcomes. Seven participants were asked to attend Montreal's 2009 *Nuit Blanche*. Four of the seven participants were considered non-art experts. The other three participants studied fine arts or art history at a post-secondary institute. All seven participants attended Nuit Blanche, although only four participants followed through in all aspects of the project. The responses of those four participants were used for analysis. The four participants consisted of two males, two females; two with backgrounds in art and two without.

The study found noticeable differences between the experiences of participants with an art background compared to those without. For example, participants without backgrounds in art reported an increased understanding of new concepts in contemporary art, such as site specificity and the relationship of objects to each other in an exhibition

space. In addition, these participants expressed their previously held perception of galleries and museums as intimidating spaces. One participant felt his knowledge about art was inadequate to appreciate art in a gallery. Participants with an art background were comfortable visiting galleries and did not indicate significant changes in their understanding of contemporary art after attending Nuit Blanche. While it may not be surprising that attendees with more art experiences would be more comfortable visiting galleries, it suggests that Nuit Blanche in Montreal appealed to attendees who would otherwise be uncomfortable or not normally interested in attending a gallery. The pilot project indicated the value in researching the perspectives of non-art experts. It became apparent in the pilot project that this current research project should focus on studying the learning and understanding of less experienced art viewers.

3.3.   Methods

3.3.1. Participants.

Nuit Blanche type events attempt to make contemporary art accessible to the general public (SNB, 2011; Banh, 2009; Nocturne, 2011). As such, this research aims to understand the experiences of attendees who are not experts in fine arts, but who are members of the general public. The selection criteria for participation are presented in section 3.4.1.

3.3.2. Interviews.

Interviews were used as the primary method of data collection for this study. The conditions created by an interview tend to be more intimate, informal, and comfortable, allowing the participants to feel trusting and open to share their personal experiences and

ideas (Creswell, 2007). Interviews also allow for more in-depth discussions to occur, unlike surveys which can limit informants' responses (Hein, G., 1998).

Pre-event and post-event interviews, (like pre and post-tests) permitted the researcher to compare participants' responses and assess any changes in appreciation, opinions, or understanding (Hein, G., 1998). Multiple interview sessions also produced more accurate representations of the participants' feelings, and allowed for a partnership to develop between the interviewer and the participants (Glesne, 2006). The semi-structured nature of interviews encouraged a more conversational dialogue, allowing topics to arise unexpectedly, and for issues to be further elaborated as necessary (Glesne, 2006) Most questions were left fairly open ended so that participants could interpret the questions in ways that were meaningful to them (Creswell, 2007).

3.3.3. Photo-based research methods.

As a second method of data collection, participants were asked to photo-document their experiences at Nocturne, when and where they thought appropriate. Singhal, Harter, Chitnis, and Sharma (2007) described participatory photography as a method of data collection that allows participants full control to visually document their experiences and stories from an individual perspective. The photographs generated by participants during Nocturne were utilized in the post-event interviews as a method of photo-elicitation (Harper, 2002). Similarly to the methods of *structured video recall* as used by researchers George and Stevenson (1991), looking at photographs during the interview allowed the participant to "trigger recall of the experience, including the thoughts and feelings which arose," (George and Stevenson, p. 206). Photo-elicitation as a method was particularly useful in learning about the individual experiences of the attendees in terms of the

validity of what they saw (Harper, 2002) but also how they interpreted the images they captured (Croghan, Griffin, Hunter, and Phoenix, 2008). In addition, photo-elicitation focused the conversation around the images that evoked memories, and prompted further investigation into the participants' relationship with the work. This method permits the interviewee to direct the discussion through explanations of the images (Croghan et al. 2008).

3.3.4. Limitations.

My subjectivity as a researcher is something that I was conscious of throughout this research. Although my background as an original founding member of the Nocturne event in Halifax cannot be separated from my role as a researcher, focus was maintained on understanding the participants' meanings, and not allowing any potential biases I may have towards Nocturne to influence my understanding or interpretation of the participants' comments (Creswell, 2007).

The size of my research population also raises possible concerns. With the experiences of only 11 participants, it is difficult to represent the diverse demographic groups and learning experiences of the thousands of people who attend the festival. The purpose of this research is not to make generalizations about specific demographics, but rather to explore the varied experiences of a select group of individuals who participated in the study.

Using a naturalistic inquiry, the intention of this study is to gain an understanding of how participants engaged with art at Nocturne without contriving their actual experiences (Patton, 1987). However, the act of being involved in a study may impact

how and what the participants decide to respond to during the event and interviews (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998).

The post-event interviews were held as closely following Nocturne as possible. Nonetheless, there is a chance that participants' ability to remember may weaken since the event. This poses a threat to the accuracy of their experiences because they may be unable to recall significant details or occurrences that could have influenced their overall experiences or encounters with art. The use of a photo-based data collection method also has limitations. Participants may rely too heavily upon discussing aspects of their night that are only represented in their photos, rather than mentioning the incidences or ideas not captured by photograph (Meo, 2010).

3.4. Outline of Procedures

3.4.1. Recruitment.

Recruitment was based on several criteria. First, to allow for honest and unbiased responses, it was important that I work with members of the public that I was not already acquainted with, and who were not familiar with my close affiliation with the Nocturne: Art at Night organization. Upon meeting the participants, I withheld information about my involvement with Nocturne simply because I wanted participants to feel comfortable sharing their ideas, stories and honest criticisms or experiences of Nocturne. Secondly, a broad demographic range was considered with the anticipation that the participants would represent a cross section of the population that attends these events. Thirdly, recruitment was based on seeking participation from individuals without a background in the arts. This meant adults without any formal training in fine arts at the university level. This

does not discount people who often attend galleries, have some experience making art, or taking an introductory level course (Lachapelle, 2009) This project used a purposeful sample (Patton, 1980), but it did not solicit participation from individuals based on criteria such as age, gender, or by specific demographic. The intention was to gather involvement from people who already planned to attend the event and who did not have a background in the arts.

To recruit participants, I used a chain effect (Patton, 1990). I contacted people familiar to me and asked that they distribute information about this research project to their networks of people and who they thought might be interested in being involved. In addition, I displayed a poster about the research project at the Hub Halifax (a membership-based meeting and office space for independent professionals and organizations) to solicit participation from Hub members who may be interested in contributing to the project.

3.4.2. Instructions.

Participants were asked to attend the event as they normally would. They were asked to take photographs of the artworks when and where they deemed appropriate, at their own discretion. Participants had access to all the events' educational and information resources made available to the public. Finally, participants were also asked to select their favourite and least favourite artwork at Nocturne to discuss in detail during the post-event interviews. The purpose of selecting a favourite and least favourite was to ensure further discussion and to gain a more in-depth understanding of their interests in art.

3.4.3. Data collection.

Individual pre-event interviews were conducted with each participant in the days and weeks prior to the Nocturne event. These pre-event interviews took between 10 and 40 minutes. Within a week following the event the participants were individually interviewed again. These post-event interviews took between 40 and 150 minutes. Interviews were held in coffee shops, at the Hub Halifax, the public library, participants' homes or at their work place. Making the meeting location for pre-event interviews convenient for participants was made a priority, for the ease and comfort of the participant. However, arrangements for potentially quieter and more suitable locations were made for the post-event interview.

Prior to beginning each interview, participants were asked to read and sign consent forms that outlined the purpose of the project, the procedures and expectations of the participants, any possible risks and benefits associated with the project and the conditions of participation. The participants were provided handouts outlining the details of this research project and Nocturne event information. All participants consented to the interviews being audio-recorded before the interviews commenced.

During the interviews, participants were asked to answer a selection of questions before talking about their personal Nocturne experiences using the photographs. Before elaborating on their favourite or least favourite work of art, the participants were asked specific questions relating to their experience of the artwork. When discussing any potential changes in understanding, participants were given a brief verbal summary of their responses from their pre-event interview regarding their understanding of the terms

contemporary art and public art. These summaries were included in the respective interview guides for each participant (as noted in appendix B).

3.4.4. Interview guide.

The *Contextual Model of Learning* developed by Falk and Dierking (2000) attempts to organize the complex ways people learn in museums by identifying and accounting for the various factors that influence learning in a museum or free-choice setting. The contextual model consists of three interrelated contexts: the personal context; the sociocultural context; and the physical context (Falk and Dierking, 2000). The interview guide was based on elements present in these three contexts.

The pre-event interviews were conducted to collect biographical information, to get a sense of the participants' interests in the arts, to ascertain their previous museum and gallery visiting habits, and finally, to discuss any past experiences with Nocturne, (see appendix A). Nocturne aims to make art accessible to the public (Nocturne Halifax, 2011). As such, participants were asked whether they thought contemporary art was accessible to the general public. The interview guide also included questions regarding their plans for attending the event (i.e. alone or with others) and how the experience might differ from viewing art in a gallery. Participants were not asked to define contemporary art or public art, but rather to elaborate on what the terms meant to them.

The post-event interview guide (see appendix B) contained questions related to the personal, social and physical aspects of an individual's experience with Nocturne (Falk and Dierking, 2000). The objective of the post-event interviews was to collect information on the participants' overall experiences during Nocturne and to gather details

about which artworks they engaged with. In addition, participants were asked to describe how the event did or did not meet their expectations, to provide details about their favourite and least favourite artworks, and to discuss changes in understanding, appreciation or awareness of art. Participants were also asked to discuss their experiences by using the photographs they had taken. Conversations were divided between describing the artworks they saw and answering the pre-determined interview questions.

3.4.5. Transcripts.

When all the interviews were completed, the pre-event and post-event interviews were transcribed verbatim and printed for analysis. Pseudonyms were used to identify the participants (Stokrocki, 1997). Participants were given the option to review their transcripts. This procedure ensures an accurate representation of the participant and allows them to add, retract or clarify their comments if necessary (Glesne 2006). Five participants reviewed the transcripts based on their interviews and approved them. One participant replied with clarifications.

3.4.6. Analysis.

The framework for my analysis was derived from the *Contextual Model of Learning* developed by Falk and Dierking (2000). Employing this model was advantageous because it provided a structure for organizing and understanding the complexities of the art viewing experience within the context of Nocturne. The model categorized elements of the experience into the three contexts: the personal context; the sociocultural context; and the physical context. A thorough discussion of the contexts as they relate to this research is offered in the Literature Review (see Chapter 2).

The contents of the transcripts were organized into the three general contexts based on the Falk and Dierking Contextual Model. Using an inductive method of analysis, and working closely between the database and the factors necessary for learning (Creswell, 2007), subgroups were then identified to more accurately represent the various and intricate aspects of participants' experiences. Within each subgroup key concepts were identified to assess and compare the responses among participants (Hoepfl, 1997).

Comparisons were drawn between responses shared during pre-event and post-event interviews to determine any changes in attitude, acquisitions of new knowledge or alterations in understanding about art and contemporary art that occurred on a personal level (Falk and Dierking, 2000). The transcripts and photographs were simultaneously cross-referenced throughout the analysis to identify trends among the participants (Hoepfl, 1997). The data provided by participants about their encounters with specific artworks was also compared and organized using the Contextual Model.

As a method of organization, participants were arranged into three groups according to their level of past experience with art. These arrangements were based on the information provided during interviews and the comparisons drawn between the participants (Hoepfl, 1997). To simplify the presentation of data, a letter will appear to indicate generally to which level of experience the participant belongs (L: Low, M: Moderate, H: High levels of Experience) (table 1). These indicators are simply meant to be a guideline and do not assume to be an accurate representation of the participants' past experiences. Participants are not defined by these criteria and often merged between the designations throughout discussion.

CHAPTER 4: PRE-EVENT RESULTS

The individuals who agreed to participate in this study represent a diverse cross section of event attendees. The 11 participants consisted of six females and five males of varying ages (table 1). The participants came from diverse occupational and academic backgrounds and lived in various regions of the Halifax Regional Municipality. The following pre-event results provide a biographical picture of the 11 participants, their interests and experience with art, and their understanding of concepts such as contemporary art, public art, and the Nocturne event.

Table 1: Participant Profile Summary

Name[4]	Age	Gender	Occupation/Educational Background	Region of HRM[5]
Becky (L)	23	Female	Architecture student	Off the Peninsula
Jeff (L)	26	Male	Structural Engineer	Off the Peninsula
Gail (L)	27	Female	Communications, marketing, and events	Off the Peninsula
Rita (M)	60	Female	Office administration	Central Halifax
Tristan (M)	32	Male	Energy Consultant (& completing MBA)	Off the Peninsula
Anne (M)	33	Female	Tax lawyer	Off the Peninsula
Sue (H)	38	Female	Hair stylist and salon owner	North end Halifax
Abby (H)	23	Female	Graduate student (Engineering)	Off the Peninsula
Evan (H)	23	Male	Works for engineering company	Central Halifax
Matt (H)	59	Male	Retail, health and hospitality services, author	Central Halifax
Kevin (H)	35	Male	Director of youth film festival	North end Halifax

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[4] Levels with past experience with art: L (low); M (moderate); H (high)
[5] Halifax Regional Municipality

4.1. Participants

The 11 participants' educational attainments ranged from grade 11 (1) and community

college and university (11), to the pursuit or completion of graduate studies (2). While the

group was quite diverse in terms of educational attainment, education levels did not

appear to have much bearing on the participants' experiences. The participating

individuals had varying levels of past experience with art. There was a fairly even

distribution of participants who had attended Nocturne in the past and those who had not

(table 2). In addition, the frequency that participants visited galleries also varied.

4.1.1. Relationship to the city.

All participants had varying relationships to the city of Halifax. This distinction depended

on several factors, including the duration of time that each person has lived in the city,

time spent living in other cities, the participants' employment or education. Halifax's

size, as well as the presence of many art galleries and cultural activities, was an incentive

for Kevin (H) to move to Halifax. Matt (H) and Rita (M) enjoyed living in central

Halifax, with many necessary amenities within close proximity to their home.

4.1.2. Interests in art.

Participants had a wide-ranging interest in art. Most participants' interests were genre-

specific such as painting, sculpture, installations, and photography. Becky (L) and Jeff

(L) had slightly more difficulty describing the types of art they were interested in. Others

spoke about movements in art history that they prefer. Evan (H), Anne (M) and Tristan

(M) all mentioned that they like modern art. Gail (L) admitted her uncertainty concerning

the type of art she enjoyed at galleries because she claimed to have little knowledge about art. Rather, she prefers attending concerts and performances which are more interactive.

Rita (M) and Matt (H) both spoke about the artist's process and their appreciation for gestural types of painting and drawing. Matt's parents were artists; he referenced attending galleries that exhibited their work. Evan (H) admitted that he did not have a clear grasp on his preferences in art, but was decisive in knowing that he likes paintings from the 1900 to the 1950s. He explained that he likes art that illustrates craftsmanship. Evan (H) knew distinctively that he dislikes most sculpture, installation art, and video art. He said *"I feel like I don't understand why it was created and it doesn't symbolize anything to me, because they are usually very abstract,"* (Raw data, p.100). Similarly, Matt (H) did not like installation art, but knew that he appreciates art that is captivating to look at whether it is pretty, beautiful, or even horrific.

4.1.3. Museum/Gallery experience.

Participants' experiences visiting museums ranged from rarely, i.e. Becky (L) and Jeff (L), to approximately once a month, i.e. Abby (H), Matt (H), and Sue (H). The individuals who visited galleries often were much more decisive about the types of art they were most interested in and were able to relate it to personal interests. Five of the 11 participants mentioned that they visited galleries most often when they travel, and offered descriptions of those experiences. Evan (H) stated that gallery-going is a priority on trips.

Four of the 11 people seemed comfortable impulsively visiting a gallery whether for a specific event or because it is conveniently located. Kevin (H) and Abby (H) both wished they went to galleries more often. Although Gail (L) worked in a gallery, she said that when she visits galleries, she walks quickly through exhibitions, occasionally

returning to artworks she passed if they interest her. Matt (H) takes his time, reads most of the labels in museums, and looks at everything. He said he finds large museums exhausting for those reasons.

4.1.4. Experience with contemporary art.

People's experience with contemporary art was fairly diverse. Jeff (L) had the least amount of experience. He had hardly any experience looking at contemporary art and had virtually never gone to art shows. Participants mentioned that they had gained access to contemporary art from looking at magazines, online, in books, or had it in their home. Two participants expressed their desire to further pursue their interest in contemporary art, either by going deeper into their current understanding or wanting to own more paintings and sculptures.

Table 2: Participants' Past Experience with Art

Museum visiting experience criteria: *Frequently* (6 -12 times a year); *Occasionally* (1- 6 times a year); *Rarely* (once every 2 years); *Never* (not at least within the last 10 years)

Overall experience with art:	Name	Previous Nocturnes	Museum Experience
Low (L)	Becky	0	Rarely
	Jeff	0	Never
	Gail	0	Rarely
Moderate (M)	Rita	1	Rarely
	Tristan	0	Frequently
	Anne	0	Occasionally
High (H)	Sue	2	Frequently
	Abby	2	Frequently
	Evan	1	Occasionally [6]
	Matt	2	Frequently
	Kevin	0[7]	Occasionally

[6] Although Evan said he only goes once a year, he has extensive gallery experience at many international modern art galleries, therefore he will be considered to have high experience with art.

[7] Kevin attended Nuit Blanche in Toronto a few years ago

4.2. Understanding Contemporary Art

Four overarching ideas (Time period, Boundaries, Concepts, and Formal/Materials) were central to the participants' understanding of contemporary art in the pre-event interviews. These ideas may not have been common to all participants, but each participant touched on at least one of the four ideas that they associated with contemporary art.

Time: Respondents believed that artists making work in the current time period, as opposed to the past, were engaged with contemporary art. They believed that it involves artists making art that is new and exciting, and that may be provocative or progressive. Initially, Gail (L) said she had no idea what contemporary art was, but upon further contemplation she concluded that the word "contemporary" means modern, therefore contemporary art must be art that reflects our current time period and society. Rita (M) related it to artists in the present, but admitted that some of their art did not appeal to her. She mentioned that she would like to talk to artists, ask them about their intentions and whether they are joking.

Boundaries: Sue (H) mentioned that unlike historical art, which is perhaps more easily definable, contemporary art cannot be categorized as easily because it does not follow any rules. Similarly, Anne (M)'s definition is predominately about artists pushing boundaries, and presenting ideas in a provocative way.

Concepts: Kevin (H) was able to confidently discuss contemporary art as it relates to the conceptual aspects of art practice. He explained that the concept is important in contemporary art and that the work has to be unified within itself, and be unique from its settings. Matt (H) was the only participant to distinguish between two types of contemporary art. The first is essentially defined as any art produced in this current time

period, regardless of who the artist is or what kind of art he or she creates. The second is art from the last 30 years, which as he explained one could easily distinguish from other periods in art history. For Matt, the latter is "*meta art, art about art… you need a catalogue and an essay to figure it out*" (Raw data, p. 69). He claimed that he had seen enough art like that at NSCAD over the years to know that he does not like that kind of contemporary art.

Formal/material: Some of the participants with minimal experience looking at art relied more heavily upon the idea of materiality and form. Becky (L) expressed little confidence in her knowledge of contemporary art but suggested it was "*paintings and stuff*" (Raw data, p. 5). Similarly, Jeff (L) was uncertain, but thought it was synonymous with modern art. He assumed it was "*not paintings on a wall… but sculptures*" (Raw data, p. 26). Although he had difficulty expressing himself, he said he related it to contemporary design and interior decorating. Tristan talked about contemporary art as something intangible unlike historical art that may represent specific images. His associations with contemporary art primarily had to do with colour, brightness, and evoking tranquil feelings.

4.3. Understanding Public Art

Four overarching themes were present in the participants' pre-event understandings of public art:

Contention: Four participants, with varying levels of experience with art, mentioned that public art has a stigma and can be problematic. They claimed that although public art is intended for the community at large, there tends to be a general dispute about the quality or significance of it. Anne (M) explained that the public often

does not understand it and that raises questions as to who is responsible for the lack of education. Tristan (M) and Evan (H) speculated that artists and administrators creating work intended for the public would be limited to the ideas and expectations of the public, rather than their own individualized tastes and interests as artists.

Accessibility: Many of the participants thought public art was meant to be accessible to everyone, in their everyday lives and particularly for people who may feel intimidated visiting an art gallery.

Occupation of space: Anne (M) and Abby (H) made reference to public art that occupies a space. Either the artwork exists in the urban environment or the artwork creates space for the viewer to interact with it directly.

The public as creator: Finally, Matt (H) and Gail (L) referenced ideas concerning who creates public art. Both participants offered two definitions. Matt (H) explained that public art means first: art sponsored by the state, usually created by artists with some degree of professionalism and who represent a specific civic or national ideology; second, that public art is done by the public, stating that "*it would be what we do as individuals in public, outside of the gatekeepers of art galleries*" (Raw data, p. 70). Similarly, Gail's (L) definition of public art related to both who made it (those with no artistic experience), and where it is exhibited (anywhere outside of standard exhibition spaces).

4.4. Accessibility of Contemporary Art

Participant views on the accessibility of contemporary art revolved predominantly around three themes: physical, intellectual and financial accessibilities.

Three people said that they thought or assumed that contemporary art is accessible to the public because it is everywhere and artists have more resources to make it accessible.

Individuals with moderate to high levels of experience with art interpreted the question as it relates to the intellectual inaccessibility of contemporary art. Participants cited both perception and physical reasons for the inaccessibility of art, such as: people being unprepared or unwilling to have their boundaries pushed; being intimated to go to art galleries; or that the art world has simply become too challenging and is no longer understood and appreciated by the masses.

Four participants, with various levels of experience, thought that contemporary art was accessible on the condition that an individual knew where to locate it, suggesting that it may be physically inaccessible due to a lack of knowledge about venues that exhibit contemporary art.

Tristan (M) thought that art in general, not just contemporary art, is perceived by the public as inaccessible because it is expensive. He suggested that education about art as an expression rather than as something related to a specific class can render art more accessible to the public.

4.5. Understanding of Nocturne

4.5.1. What Nocturne is.

Most participants had a fairly good understanding of the concept of Nocturne. Three themes arose from their responses. First, that Nocturne is about the art community. Second, that Nocturne involves bringing together the public or businesses with art. Third, that the physicality of the event is a large component of what makes Nocturne.

Kevin (H) and Matt (H) knew that Nocturne was modelled after the Nuit Blanche concept that takes place in other cities. Three people identified Nocturne as an opportunity for members of the art community to showcase their work. Kevin (H) spoke of the event as a celebration of diverse art forms. Jeff (L) knew the least about Nocturne. He had not heard of the event prior to being approached to participate in this study.

Another prevalent idea was the physical notion of moving throughout the city. For example, people described it as a chance to wander the streets, to explore art everywhere, and to witness art installations in an urban setting. Matt (H) also saw it as an opportunity for citizens to discover neighbourhood galleries that they may not be familiar with.

4.5.2. Who Nocturne is for.

Eight participants commented that they felt Nocturne was for anyone and/or everybody, regardless of age or knowledge about art. To some, this included families, youth, and adults. Kevin (H) thought it was for people who were curious and open to art, and wanted to be able to sample various kinds of art in a noncommittal way.

Tristan (M) and Matt (H) were the only exceptions, as they did not necessarily feel it was for everyone. Tristan (M) thought that Nocturne was not intended "*for the pure art enthusiast*" (Raw data, p.52) because the event is organized throughout the city rather than in a single gallery, following traditional art viewing conventions. Matt's response also differed from the group. He suspected that Nocturne was intended for the City Council, to remind Councillors that there are many good aspects of the city including a thriving arts community. He said; *[Nocturne] may have one nominal audience it expects but the subtext one is really let's persuade the powers that be that art is something worthwhile (Raw data, p. 64.)*

Gail (L) discussed the relationship between art and people's lives. She talked about events such as Nocturne and Culture Days[8] making art accessible to the public. Gail (L) explained that people often feel that if they are not talented they cannot participate in arts and cultural activities. She claimed that these initiatives allow people to be creative and reminds them about the positive qualities of art.

4.6.   Motivations for Attending Nocturne

Participants were predominantly motivated to attend Nocturne for personal reasons relating to educational and/or entertainment motives.

Curiosity was a significant factor among participants for wanting to attend Nocturne. Participants were interested in learning about what artists were creating, and more about the event itself. Others were keen to familiarize themselves with the art community in the city. Gail (L) wanted to attend because she saw the potential for interactive art projects to make art accessible to the public.

The prospect of being entertained was another significant reason people wanted to attend Nocturne. Novelty was a draw for Sue (H). She specifically appreciated that Nocturne is free, occurs once a year, and is an active evening. Abby (H) and Evan (H), who attended Nocturne in previous years, were motivated to go again because they enjoyed themselves in the past.

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[8] Culture Days is a national program that encourages citizens to be creative in their communities on the same weekend across the country with the intention of raising awareness and making art accessible (Culture Days, 2011).

4.7.   Expectations of Nocturne

Participants with the least amount of art viewing experience and who had never attended Nocturne claimed to hold no expectations prior to attending the event. Becky (L) mentioned that her expectations were not specifically defined. Other participants simply expressed their openness to the new experience.

Participants with slightly more art viewing experience talked about their expectations as they related to the act of viewing art. For example, Kevin (H) felt the event was going to be about discovery and looked forward to sharing the experience with others. Participants who had attended in the past, like Abby (H) and Evan (H) for example, were both excited about the upcoming event and set high expectations based on the high quality of their previous visits to Nocturne.

4.7.1. Expectations: Different than a gallery.

Participants expected the experience of viewing art at Nocturne to be different from galleries for reasons relating to particular art viewing conventions. Participants anticipated that visitors would not have to behave a certain way, such as being quiet and speaking critically about the art. Kevin (H) expected that venues might take more risks with the type of art exhibited because they would not be limited by institutional constraints. Others thought there would be more social interactions, particularly with artists. The outdoor setting would allow visitors to move freely and view many projects in a short period of time. Other expectations included that the artworks would be integrated with the cityscape and the experience would be more fun, comfortable, and less intimating than in galleries.

The preceding pre-event results summarize the expectations, understandings and past experiences of the 11 participants in this study. The following chapter presents the findings of the post-event interviews. The text highlights the experiences of the participants with the artworks and the event overall from the personal, social and physical perspectives.

CHAPTER 5: POST-EVENT RESULTS

All 11 participants followed the instructions given prior to Nocturne 2010 including, but
not limited to, attending the event, taking photographs of their experience at the event[9],
and participating in post-event interviews. During the post event interviews, all 11
participants discussed having visited at least eight visual art projects throughout the night
(table 3). In some instances, the participants visited anchor projects, where they
witnessed multiple artworks at each site. Two participants did not visit any art galleries,
focussing their attention on outdoor installations instead. Others, such as Jeff (L), visited
several galleries (table 3).

Table 3: Participant Event Details

Name[10]	Attended with:	# of projects	# of galleries	Favourite[11]	Least Favourite
Becky (L)	Female friend	8	0	*ArtsExpress*	*Parked*
Jeff (L)	Girlfriend	13	5	*ArtsExpress*	*Ordinarium, Drive thru*
Gail (L)	2 female friends	12	1	Interactive light	*Luminemeton*
Rita (M)	Matt & 2 friends	10	4	Veith St. Gallery	Blue bus
Tristan(M)	Ann	8	3	A photograph	A photo exhibition
Anne (M)	Tristan	8	3	*3D Stereoscopic*	A ceramic tray
Sue (H)	Husband & friends	9	0	*Parked/MPV[12]*	*The Falls*
Abby (H)	Evan	20	4	*Prime Life Time*	M. Fernandes (YITM)[13]
Evan (H)	Abby	19	4	A painting	A painting
Matt (H)	Rita & 2 friends	8	5	Veith St Gallery	Sobey art award exhibition
Kevin (H)	Wife	12	1	*City mail*	*Apprivoiser la Foudre*

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[9] The photographs and interpretations of art included in this thesis are representations of the opinions of the
participants in this study and are not intended to be those of the artists themselves exhibiting at Nocturne:
Art at Night, 2010

[10] Levels of past experience with art: L (Low); M (Moderate); H (High)

[11] More information, including artist names, full project names, descriptions, and locations of these
artworks can be found in the Nocturne 2010 event program (Nocturne, Halifax, 2010). Titles included here
have been shortened for formatting. Refer to Nocturne program for details.

[12] MPV – refers to the Mobile Pancake Vehicle featured in *an exercise in giving...* (figure 12)

[13] YITM – refers to the Anchor Project, *Year in the Making,* curated by Saunders. M. Fernandes was one of
the featured artists in this anchor project (figure 3)

5.1. Selection of artworks viewed by participants

5.1.1. City Mail, by Alison Creba, in collaboration with William Vandermeulen.

City Mail (Figure 2), located inside a recently emptied storefront in the downtown core, was visited and commented on by many participants. This installation piece was a temporary post office and used the nostalgia of letter writing to comment on issues of urban planning, and its subsequent effects on communication and community in Halifax' diminishing city centre (Nocturne Halifax, 2010). The post office accepted letters from the public throughout the night. The letters were sorted in the post office and delivered throughout the evening.

Participants with more art viewing experience appeared to have appreciated *City Mail* the most among the participants. Kevin (H), whose expectations of the pieces were exceeded, expressed an appreciation of the various levels of meaning and the interactive nature of the installation. He enjoyed how the project enlivened Barrington St., and gave the derelict space energy. Kevin perceived an inseparable connection between the piece, its location, and its limited existence in the event. He was aware that *City Mail* would no longer exist in the same manifestation following Nocturne, and therefore appreciated seeing it at Nocturne 2010.

Evan (H) also enjoyed *City Mail* for similar reasons, although he did not select it as his favourite. He enjoyed the interactivity of the piece and participated by sending an anonymous letter to the strangers who currently reside in his previous residence. He appreciated the concept of creating a post office and thought it was very artistic.

Photo credit: Participant Kevin

Photo credit: L. Carmichael

Figure 2: *City Mail*, by Alison Creba, in collaboration with William Vandermeulen Barrington St. **(**Zone 1). City Mail exists as a community project prior to and following the event, accepting letters at various post boxes throughout the city (Bousquet, 2010). The installation on Barrington St. only existed during Nocturne.

However, he did not think that the act of delivering mail was artistic, and considered it more of an event than an art piece.

A selection of participants with less experience with art were not as interested in engaging with the piece. Jeff (L) expressed a lack of interest in spending much time looking at the installation. He observed it quickly but decided to continue walking. Gail (L) discussed coming across the artwork while searching for another and was therefore disinterested in interacting with it and she found it boring. Gail (L) explained that she did not see how it was considered art, and that she was not motivated to find more information on the piece to increase her comprehension.

5.1.2. A Year in the Making, The Public Gardens Anchor Project, curated by Scott Saunders.
This anchor project (figure 3) consists of at least nine (9) projects including audio recordings, performances, and installations that drew from the immediate environment inside the Halifax Public Gardens. Artists created artworks about the water features, insects, small animals, and architecture inside the Victorian style gardens in the downtown area.

Six out of 11 participants discussed visiting the Public Gardens. Many of these participants were eager to arrive at the Gardens to explore the various projects. Sue (H) decided to skip other projects on the way to the Gardens but was disappointed when she was not captivated by many of the artworks. She was unimpressed by the overall anchor project but enjoyed being able to access the Public Gardens at night. Evan (H) felt underwhelmed by the projects overall. For him, an installation consisting of an inflated cloth sculpture, lights, and music (by Valerie Salez & Jess Mitchell) was a redeeming

Photo credit: Participants Matt and Rita
Detail of Fernandes' audio stations

Photo credit: Participant Abby and Evan
View of Salez and Mitchell installation

Figure 3: *A Year in the Making – The Public Gardens Anchor Project* Scott Saunders, Curator (featuring: M. Wiebe, A. MacMillan, S. Saunders, C. Leonard, M. Fernandes, E. King, V. Salez & J. Mitchell, W. Johnston, A. Kelly, S. Kelly, S. St. Aubin, and S. Audry). Spring Garden Rd. and Sackville St. **(**Zone 3).

feature in the Gardens. He sat and appreciated the piece next to a fountain for a short while, as his friends moved on. He admitted that environmental factors, such as being outdoors at night, in a quiet area, next to the water fountain, and nearby music were hugely influential components to his appreciation of the piece. He admitted that if he had seen the piece under different physical circumstances (such as in a gallery), he likely would have dismissed it.

On an interpretative level, Evan (H) also enjoyed it because he did not feel pressured to reflect deeply on the meaning of the piece. Rather, it was enough to simply appreciate it on a formal level. He did not feel as though there was an inherent idea or meaning that he was forced to discover. Throughout both interviews, Evan (H) discussed an unwillingness to further explore difficult artworks, as it often frustrates him that he cannot simply enjoy art for its formal characteristics.

5.1.3. ArtsExpress presents: Youth on the Radar, by students at J.L. Ilsley High School.

This mixed media collaborative exhibition (figure 4) features artworks created by Spryfield youth with the assistance of local artists. A series of three large relief artworks were mounted to the halls in the public spaces of the Halifax Provincial Court in downtown Halifax.

Three participants who experienced *ArtsExpress* spoke highly of the piece. Jeff (L) and Becky (L), who likely had the least amount of experience with art, both selected this as their favourite artwork at Nocturne. Both participants appreciated it for similar reasons. They valued the piece as a community project made by youth, intended for youth, to keep them interested and engaged in meaningful activities. Both participants

Photo credit: Participant Becky

Photo credit: Participant Kevin

Figure 4: *ArtsExpress presents: Youth on the Radar*. By students of J.L. Ilsley High School. Halifax Provincial Court, Spring Garden Rd. (Zone 3).

discussed connections between the location of the works in the law courts and the high school students who created them. Becky (L) held low expectations of student work based on the description in the program, but was very surprised and impressed at the quality and significance of the pieces. She expressed that having the student's art at a place of great importance would have significant impact on the students. She recalled her experience of having a bench she designed and built installed in a community garden and how significant that was for her. Becky (L) assumed that the students would feel a similar sense of pride in having their work exhibited in a prominent place.

Jeff (L) appreciated how the piece relieved some of the strain and anxiety associated with the formal and serious building. Jeff (L) also interpreted the symbolism of the hands as coming together both figuratively and literally. He said he was drawn to the three relief artworks because they are more sculptural than anything else featured at Nocturne.

5.1.4. Morphos, by Sam Kinsley.

During post-event interviews Morphos (figure 5) was cited by the most participants. Morphos was a mobile performance involving a collection of wandering sculptures. Referred to as "morpho", each group consisted of two or three performers wrapped in a shared cloth casing. The performers moved throughout the city during Nocturne, engaging with its surroundings.

Nine of 11 participants experienced it, and all had varying qualities of experience. Jeff (L) and his girlfriend were startled, and felt uncertain but were not made uncomfortable by it. Anne (M) commented that she found it interesting despite not liking modern dance. Anne (M) also explained that it was fascinating, calming, and that it

Photo credit: Participants Abby and Evan

Figure 5: *Morphos,* Sam Kinsley. Mobile project, detail.

explored the concept of birth in nature, but in an urban environment. Abby (H) thought the project was very funny and enjoyed watching the responses of people around her. She described the public as confused by the piece, as it moved through the crowds, subtly commanding space as it stirred. Tristan (M) and Evan (H) disliked it and of all the participants, they were likely the most annoyed by the performance.

5.1.5. Veith St. Gallery.

Veith Street Gallery Studio Association (figure 6) is a non-profit community arts centre located in North End Halifax. The Gallery showcases artworks created by the members of Creative Spirit East, a collective of artists with disabilities or related challenges (Veith St. n.d.).

Rita (M) and Matt (H) were the only participates to travel to the Veith Street Gallery. Both cited having had a very good and rewarding time. Matt (H) appreciated the opportunity to actually create his own art and to speak directly with the host of the gallery. Having never heard of the gallery before arriving, he learned about the organization, the gallery itself, and the artists involved with the exhibition. Matt (H) particularly appreciated that artists living with physical and mental challenges, who possess little or no professional experience, had created the artworks.

Rita (M) also valued her experience there for many of the same reasons as Matt (H). She explained that she prefers to take her time to look at art, and enjoyed looking at the paintings. She felt that the space was relaxed, friendly, approachable, and accessible. She appreciated the feeling of spontaneity in the paintings, and they spent approximately half an hour at this gallery.

Photo credit: Participants Matt and Rita

Figure 6: Veith Street Gallery, Veith St. Non-profit community arts centre (Zone 4)

5.1.6. Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.

As the largest art gallery in Atlantic Canada, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (AGNS)

(figure 7) contains the provinces art collection, consisting of over 15,000 works.

During Nocturne, AGNS offered guided tours and studio activities. On view at the time

of the festival was The Sobey Art Award: 2010 Atlantic Long List exhibition[14], A Show

of Hands, featuring Nova Scotia folk art, and *Gallery*, a performance by Louise Hoyt,

Sherry Lee Hunter and Sheilagh Hunt. Seven out of the 11 participants discussed visiting

the AGNS. Participants had varying experiences at the gallery. Tristan (M) found a

couple of paintings that suited his personal interest and aesthetic in the Art Sales and

Rental Gallery at AGNS. He did not feel as appreciative of the dance performance called

Gallery that occurred in one of the AGNS' smaller exhibition spaces. It reminded him of

a past experience attending a modern dance performance that he did not enjoy.

Matt (H) was perhaps the most critical of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. He was

not moved by any of the exhibitions. He said, surprisingly, that he found himself

intrigued with the Maud Lewis[15] permanent exhibit (which he has seen in the past). Matt

(H) suspected perhaps he was inspired by her work after having seen the art at Veith St.

Gallery. He said he enjoyed looking at art by people who were not professional artists.

He said,

> *I thought, not liking the art made by people who are paid to make art and got a CV, here I am looking at art again that I enjoy that seems to be made by people who aren't normally thought of as artists* (Raw data, p.278)

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[14] The Sobey Art Award is a significant prize awarded to a Canadian contemporary artist under the age of 40. The annual prize awards $ 70,000 in prize money to finalists and winners, who exhibited at established galleries within 18 months of their nomination (Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 2011a).
[15] Maud Lewis (1903- 1970) is a treasured Nova Scotian folk artist. Her house, along with many of her paintings, cards, and various painted objects are exhibited at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 2011b)

Photo credit: Participants' Anne and Tristan

Figure 7: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. 1723 Hollis St. (Zone 1)

He found himself drawing comparisons between the implications of exhibiting the artists featured in the *Sobey Art Award* exhibition (competing for a prestigious art prize), and Maud Lewis (who made humble paintings for little or no money), and the artists he had seen at the Veith St. Gallery earlier in the evening.

5.1.7. Prime Life Time, by Laura Dawe.

Laura Dawe's participatory art project, *Prime Life Time*, (figure 8) was located inside the Khyber Institute of Contemporary Arts, a non-profit, multi-purpose, artist-run centre in a historic Victorian style building in downtown Halifax. The artist encouraged visitors to wear costumes, utilize props, learn a short script, and to act out a scene from a play written by Dawe. The brief scene was recorded and simultaneously displayed on televisions inside the building and outside on the street.

Four out of 11 participants mentioned visiting the Khyber. Jeff (L) had never been, and was impressed with the conserved architecture. Evan (H) and Abby (H) attended together, and spoke excitedly about their experiences. Abby (H) particularly enjoyed *Prime Life Time,* selecting it as her favourite project that night. She appreciated it for many reasons such as the humour in watching her friend participate; she also enjoyed playing a part in the performance with Evan. She liked the piece because visitors could appreciate it at different levels, either as a participant or a viewer. Abby (H) also expressed her enjoyment of the inclusivity inherent in the work, how strangers and the artist interacted with each other in the community art space. She mentioned that she was surprised that she was not nervous to wear a costume and act out a scene. Abby (H) explained that it was not something she would normally do, considering she is usually very hesitant about presenting in front of people.

Photo credit: Participant Abby

Figure 8: *Prime Life Time*, Laura Dawe. Khyber Institute of Contemporary Arts & Barrington St. (Zone 1), detail of participatory installation.

5.1.8. 3D Stereoscopic Sound: Rethink the Music Video, by Andrew Hicks.

This installation (figure 9) consisted of the projection of a series of short 3-dimensional visualisations of music by local, Halifax musicians. The animations were viewed in an immersive environment. Participants wore 3D glasses in a dark space while viewing the animations.

Tristan (M) and Anne (M) were the only participants to experience *3D Stereoscopic Sound*. Anne (M) described it as a 3D visualization of music. She described being directed into a dark space, wearing 3D glasses and viewing distinct, brief videos that contained both literal and figurative interpretations of music. Tristan (M) was explicit in describing the physical details of the place and artwork, which he claimed had significantly influenced his experience of the installation. Anne (M) explained that the sensory deprivation brought on by the dark space and wearing the 3D glasses controlled what the viewer was able to notice in the videos.

According to Anne (M), the videos evoked the emotion of the music. She thought it was a fascinating expression of music, colour, and movement and said she felt as though she could see and feel music. She was impressed that the artists could use ordinary music and make it extraordinary. She said she would have never conceived an idea like that and that the videos were like a story.
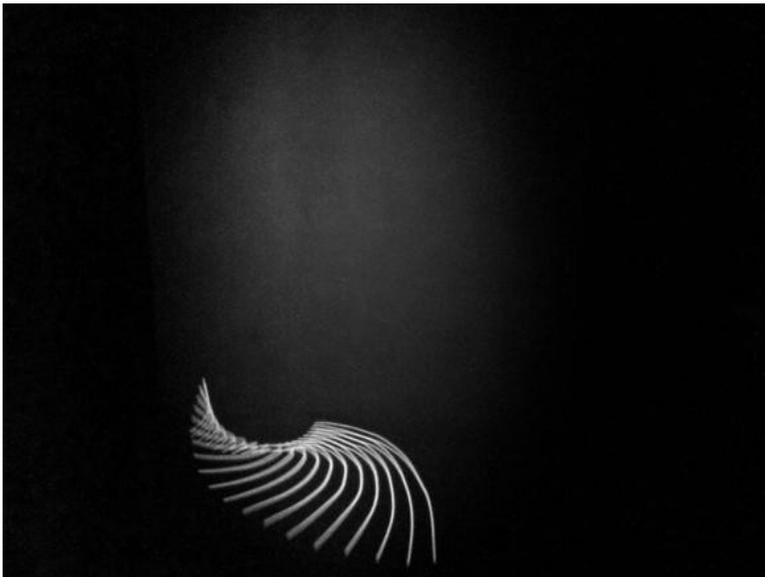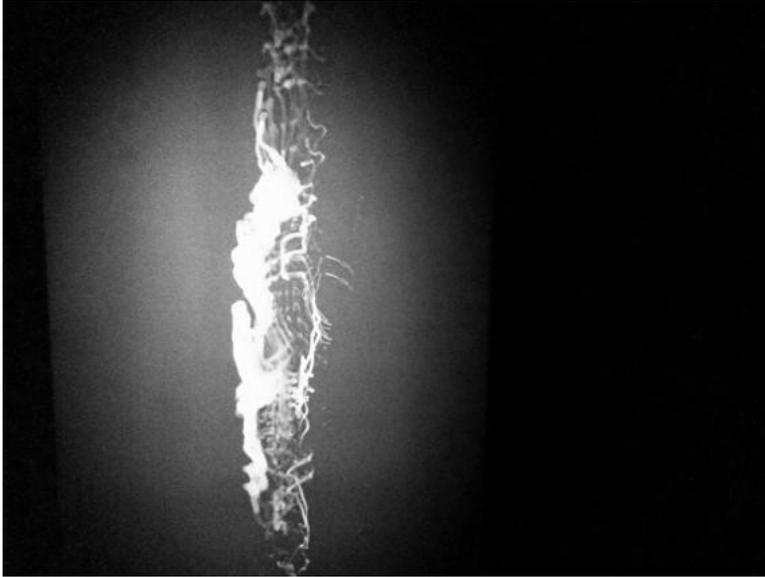
Photo credit: Participants Anne and Tristan

Figure 9: *3D Stereoscopic Sound: Rethink the Music Video*, by Andrew Hicks. The Academy Building, NSCAD University Campus, Brunswick St.
(Zone 1)

5.1.9. Apprivoiser la foudre, by Amélie Proulx & Douglas Bamford.

Apprivoiser la foudre (which basically translates to Taming the Lightning in Engliah) was a site specific installation (figure 10) that utilized the future location of the Nova Scotia Power head office, where were still under construction. The interior of the facility was transformed into an electrical storm, visible from the exterior of the building. The artists intended to draw connections between the currently renovated historical building and the natural world (Nocturne Halifax, 2010).

Kevin made visiting *Apprivoiser la foudre* a priority that night, but explained that he was disappointed to find the reality did not live up to his expectations, the hype, and what others had told him about it prior to Nocturne. He commented that *"it didn't have a lot to say, even though it said that it had a lot to say according to its description"* (Raw data, p. 148). Kevin (H) felt a direct correlation between the site, the sponsors, and the artwork which insinuated for him feelings of mistrust for having expected one thing from the artists and the [corporate] entity, and discovering another. He found the construction site to be troubling and was very critical of the entire installation.

Abby (H), Gail (L), and Evan (H) also visited the installation. They enjoyed seeing it, but did not elaborate much further. Gail (L) expected to go inside, and did not stay long before moving to the next project.

Photo credit: L. Carmichael

Figure 10: *Apprivoiser la foudre*, Amélie Proulx & Douglas Bamford. Nova Scotia Power Corporate Office, corner of Lower Water St. & Marginal Rd. (Zone 2)

5.1.10. Ordinarium Drive-Thru, by Ordinary Collective (Lis Van Berkel, Leigh Ann Vardy & Joanne Kerrigan).

The Ordinarium Drive-Thru (figure 11) was situated in a downtown parking lot. The piece transformed the fee booth at the entrance of the lot using lights, sounds, and interactive objects. The project encouraged attendees to take part in an "enigmatic exchange" (Nocturne Halifax, 2010). Visitors were asked to delight in the irrationality of the complex operations intended to make daily life simpler and quicker, but that rather complicate tasks.

Four participants discussed visiting *Ordinarium, Drive-Thru* and all offered feelings of general confusion regarding how a visitor was intended to interact with it. Jeff (L) identified it as his least favourite place, explaining that it "*seemed like it was kind of thrown together… it was just a little chaotic I guess. Maybe it was different when it first opened, maybe it was more set up*" (Raw data, p. 189). He explained that he expected something different and was unsure of how to proceed upon arriving at the installation. He was uncertain as to whether there were people (artists or volunteers) inside the tollbooth, and what they were doing. Jeff (L) did not understand the significance of it. He mentioned that other visitors appeared to also be confused.

Similarly, Abby (H) expressed feelings of confusion when she and Evan (H) visited the installation. She discussed a line-up of people, excited to be engaging in the work, despite not understanding what it was about. She explained how she pushed the buttons, followed instructions, wrote things down and moved around the tollbooth, but sensed a general confusion among the group of people engaging with the piece.

Photo credit: Participant Jeff
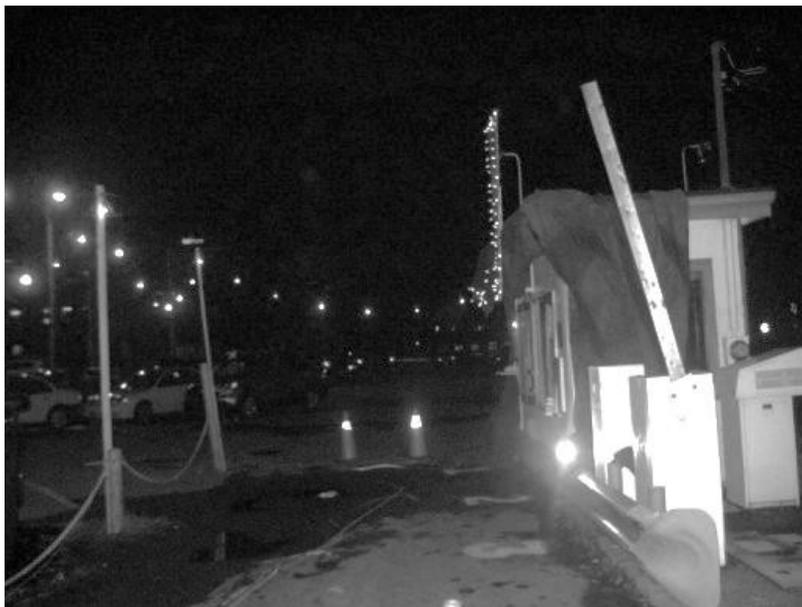
Photo credit: Participant Becky

Figure 11: *Ordinarium Drive-Thru*, by Ordinary Collective (Lis Van Berkel, Leigh Ann Vardy & Joanne Kerrigan)**.** Parking Lot, corner of Birmingham St. & Clyde St. (Zone 3)

Becky (L) considered engaging with the piece, but decided not to when she approached it and saw another person interacting with it and noticed that nothing happened.

5.1.11. Parked, by Kiersten Holden & Zak Miller.

*Parked (*figure 12) was an installation located in the parking lot of the Halifax Regional Public Library. The piece referenced youth get-togethers, and commented on the combination of happenings in both rural and urban settings (Nocturne Halifax, 2010).

Three participants visited *Parked*. Sue (H) immediately interpreted the parked cars as a tailgate party. She entered the space, taking a seat among the other people who were presumably the artists. She felt comfortable, and as though she was momentarily transported to another place. She realized inside that it was meant to feel like a camp site.

Jeff (L) and Becky (L) on the other hand described very different experiences. Jeff (L) thought it was a party and did not enter the space. He had little recollection of the presence of music and thought the installation was strange. Becky (L) also recalled a sense of confusion, and did not feel welcome to enter the space.

5.1.12. *"an exercise in giving myself and the stories we share" or "how I made you pancakes for your treasures",* by Noah Derek Logan in collaboration with everyone.

This mobile project (figure 13) encouraged story exchange by inviting the public to offer stories in exchange for freshly made pancakes. The artist created a temporary kitchen inside a van, referred to as the Mobile Pancake Vehicle (MPV), and parked it at various locations throughout the city during Nocturne. Participants could enter the van with him. Participants could provide him with a story or object that the artist archived in the collection before receiving a pancake and syrup.

Photo credit: Participant Sue

Figure 12: *Parked*, Kiersten Holden & Zak Miller. Spring Garden Road Memorial Public
Library Parking lot, (Zone 3), interior view

Photo credit: Participant Sue

Photo credit: Participant Gail - Interior of Mobile Pancake Vehicle

Figure 13: *"an exercise in giving myself and the stories we share" or "how I made you pancakes for your treasures"*, Noah Derek Logan. Mobile project in a van,.

Sue (H) and Gail (L) were the only participants to encounter the Mobile Pancake Vehicle. This project was among the projects Sue (H) and her friends wanted to see and were very excited to have conveniently stumbled upon it while leaving the Public Gardens. She enjoyed this piece immensely. Despite expressing uncertainty as to how to interpret the artwork, she drew interpretations about bartering systems, modes of exchange, and interaction. Sue (H) enjoyed discussing this project with her friends, entering the van with the artist, and exchanging a leaf for pancakes.

5.2. Experience Contextualized

The following three sections further explore participants' experiences at Nocturne using the three contexts (personal, social, physical) as described by Falk and Dierking (1992; 2000).

5.2.1. Personal Context.

5.2.1.1. Expectations – Post event.
Overall, most participants claimed their expectations were met based on their experience throughout the evening. Participants who claimed to hold no explicit expectations felt that their experience at Nocturne exceeded their expectations or were what they anticipated. Many of the participants who had attended Nocturne in the past appeared to have enjoyed themselves this year but expressed that the evening did not quite meet their expectations.

Regardless of their past experiences, all participants claimed to have enjoyed their evening overall, yet some unexpected issues influenced several participants' experiences

at Nocturne both in positive and negative ways. For example, some of the participants were surprised by the overall size and scale of the event, (e.g. Kevin and Gail) others expressed an inability to locate specific projects (e.g. Tristan and Anne), or a disinterest in galleries and venues. Jeff (L) was discouraged by venues that merely had an open-door event as opposed to a specially programmed activity, and Rita (M) and Matt (H) found there was insufficient time to explore the works and festival in depth.

5.2.1.2. Contemporary art

Three of the eleven participants expressed a conscious shift between the pre-event and the post-event interviews in their understanding of contemporary art. These participants were among the least experienced in the arts. Becky (L) stated that Nocturne helped her to identify art forms that she had not considered previously, and to realize that contemporary art is more than simply paintings. Similarly, Jeff (L) explained that he gained an understanding of installation art, as he had virtually never considered it previously. He said; "*it's kind of moving, living art I guess, as opposed to… a piece that was created*" (Raw data, p. 203).

Six participants, many of whom have the most past experience viewing art, felt that attending Nocturne did not change their understanding of contemporary art. Nonetheless, they did admit that their experiences may have confirmed and shaped their already held beliefs about contemporary art. Gail (L) however, with little experience with contemporary art, decided that her understanding did not change. She illustrated her unaltered perspective by explaining that the paintings of antique cars at Attica (a furniture store and gallery in downtown Halifax) are not contemporary art simply because they do not communicate ideas about our current time.

5.2.1.3. Public Art

Overall participant's post-event views on public art were quite varied. Some stated that they experienced no change in their understanding, yet they did describe an increased appreciation of public art. Others stated a change in understanding, leading to new ideas regarding the function and nature of public art.

Five participants felt that their understanding of public art had changed. Anne (M) initially thought that her opinion remained unaffected, but upon further reflection, stated that Nocturne encouraged the public to view artworks, and that "*maybe public art isn't necessarily a big fixture cemented to the ground, maybe it's actually any art available to the public…, as opposed to paying to go somewhere… with restricted admission" (*Raw data, p. 221).

At the outset, Evan (H) did not think his definition of public art changed a great deal. Upon further discussion of two artworks he enjoyed, (*City Mail* and *Prime Life Time*) he realized that the viewer interacting with the artwork itself is an element of public art that he had not considered before. In the past, he had enjoyed being able to do small, hands on art activities at venues during Nocturne. This year however, he explained that he got to interact with the artworks as a participant, which to him became part of the meaning of the piece. Although he enjoyed participating in many of the projects at Nocturne, he did not select them as his favourite. He explained that if he was involved in the making the meaning of the work as a spectator, then it eliminates the mystique associated with the skill and ability that he appreciates about art. The skill and presentation of the work no longer reside in the artistic efforts of the artist, but exists because of his participation and that made it more difficult for him to appreciate the artwork based on his existing criteria for evaluating art.

Matt (H) also reconsidered his understanding of public art after having encountered a performance by NSCAD fashion students posing and modeling in a store front window for the public. This experience illustrated to him that artists may have a particular intention when they perform a work, but it changes when they interact with the audience. The interplay between the models and the public reminded Matt (H) of how "*public art starts going to a hyper public art where the audience becomes part of it and you hadn't planned that, so it expands…, its public on top of public*" (Raw data, p. 291). Public art in this instance is constantly changing once the performance makes contact with the public.

Kevin (H) thought that the event did not change his understanding of public art. Rather, it reaffirmed his comprehension of it, and stated that he did not believe the artworks exhibited at Nocturne were public art. According to his definition, public art should relate to its location and be accessible to all members of the public, not just those who attend an event.

5.2.1.4. Learning from Nocturne.

5.2.1.4.1. Learning from an artwork.

Four participants discussed an instance of learning from a specific work. Matt (H) and Rita (M) each elaborated on their own feelings of looking at archival photographs at the Nova Scotia Archives (Nocturne Halifax, 2010). Rita's appreciation of photography increased while looking at antique photographs. She was reminded of the technique and skills necessary for making a high quality image. Matt (H) was moved by the photographs he saw. He expected to see something different, but enjoyed it immensely nonetheless. He said "*feeling like it's a sunny day 110 years ago as if you were there is a very powerful experience*" (Raw data, p. 292). Matt (H) also explained that he had not

considered photography as art other than documentation, but he found himself to be very moved by the photographs.

Gail (L) did not think she learned anything. She explained that she took an art class, which helped her to understand elements of certain artworks, such as how the ceramicist, Christine Waugh constructed the tall sculpture *Through the Darkness*, (Nocturne Halifax, 2010) and how the light interacted with the camera to create time-lapsed images during her participation in *Community Light Interactive* (Nocturne Halifax, 2010). Evan (H) claimed to have learned facts about the Halifax explosion that he did not already know when he saw *Halifax Explosion Interpretative Fusion* by Charles P Allen High school students, Anna Whalen, and Nathan Beeler (Nocturne Halifax, 2010)

5.2.1.4.2. Increased appreciation.

Five participants discussed an increased appreciation for contemporary art. Becky (L) came to realize that art can be more than simply paintings and drawings. She explained that her experience at Nocturne introduced her to new forms of art that she may be able to recognise and appreciate in the future. Despite this potentially new understanding of art, she still had trouble admitting some of the works were considered art. She said;

> *I guess those people walking around [Morphos] that's not really art, but I guess it is, when they think about it, yeah it could be art, but in my head I don't classify that as art. Same as the parked cars, I don't see that as art* (Raw data, p. 128)

She assumed that they were art, within the context of Nocturne, an art event, yet she found it difficult to categorize these works under her existing understanding. Both Sue (H) and Abby (H) stated that they want events like this more often and to be out looking at art more frequently. Kevin (H) suggested that it invigorated his appreciation for art, but it did not change it. For Rita (M) and Evan (H), they felt that the experience

helped them to determine more or less what types of art they enjoy, and their personal tastes. Evan (H) determined with more accuracy that he values things that have artistic skill and, therefore, has greater difficultly appreciating a work based solely on its conceptual merits. Five participants felt as though it did not change their appreciation.

5.2.1.4.3. Choice and control.

Freedom to choose was a prevalent topic among participants when discussing Nocturne in its entirety. Six people mentioned that they appreciated being able to choose how they spent their night. Personal flexibility in both schedule and destination, and the broad variety and distinction of all the projects was valued by participants. The freedom to pick what to engage with was among Becky (L)'s favourite aspects of Nocturne. Anne (M) thoroughly enjoyed being able to pick and choose which projects to interact with, she compared the process of choosing and interacting certain works to speed dating.

5.2.2. Sociocultural Context.

5.2.2.1. Participants' accompaniment.

All participants attended Nocturne with friends or significant others. The social interactions among the groups influenced the experiences of participants. Some participants who went in groups of three or more found that the social dynamics of navigating and accommodating the interests of all the group members to be challenging. Sue (H) mentioned that she attended with people with backgrounds in art. She explained that these people were opinionated about most projects and quickly moved to the next artwork. Matt (H) and Rita (M) experienced Nocturne with two of their friends who had a car, which dictated where they went during much of the night. Rita (M) reported that she

would have looked at things longer and in a different light if she were not with their friends. She said she most likely would have gone to different locations.

Evan (H) mentioned that his friends would make assumptions about the meaning or significance of an artwork. He explained that he generally does not feel comfortable making estimations of the artists' intentions. Rather preferred to keep his ideas to himself. Evan (H) also wanted to wander into places at his own pace, whereas his friends had pre-determined destinations and limited amounts of time. His friends were more interested in exploring the temporary installations as opposed to visiting the galleries. Evan (H) said he assumed he would not return to those galleries in the near future and therefore wanted to visit them during Nocturne.

Going with groups of people did not necessarily appear to be negative for all participants. Anne (M) and Tristan (M) who attended together, and Jeff (L) who attended with his girlfriend, appeared to have had positive experiences exploring the sites in small groups. Becky (L) explained that she was grateful to have gone with her friend. They were content to discover, upon leaving the event, that they both enjoyed the same projects. Becky (L) recalled that when they encountered *Morphos,* they were both uncomfortable, and appreciated each other's presence: "*We saw them and [my friend] was like, 'if I wasn't here with you, I'd be terrified'"* (Raw data, p. 116)

The social aspect of attending and participating in projects in Nocturne was a large component of Gail's experience. In particular, her favourite artwork involved her friends and herself collaboratively moving small lights while a photographer captured the movements in time lapsed photographs that were then projected on the side of a building.

5.2.2.1.1. Discussion with companions regarding the art.

All participants mentioned having dialogues about the art with their friends or significant others throughout the night. The amount of depth with which they discussed those conversations varied between participants. Becky (L) expressed her personal realization that people should not attend Nocturne alone; that talking with people is an important aspect of the experience. Most participants stated that they talked about the art with their friends or partners in general terms, and not in much detail. Three participants described a cursory discussion with those they attended the festival with, based on likes and dislikes. Gail (L) chatted with friends about the art, specifically if she and her friend did not understand an artwork.

5.2.2.2. Participants interactions external to group.

5.2.2.2.1. Interactions with stranger.

Eight out of 11 participants discussed encounters with other attendees during the event. These appear to have been positive exchanges in most cases. Becky (L) and Jeff (L) each mentioned that they observed other visitors engaging with *Ordinarium, Drive Thru*, as a way of comprehending the piece and deciding whether to physically interact with it themselves.

Kevin (H) overheard a gentleman speaking about his displeasure about not being able to enter the *City Mail* installation. Kevin (H) decided at that point that he was content not to be able to access the installation; viewing the installation through the storefront windows was sufficient and reinforced his interpretation and appreciation of the work being about the theme of boundaries. Two participants said they liked being

able to overhear others' conversations about the art which, for these participants, was part of the overall experience.

Abby (H) said she was learning when she observed how people interact with art. She enjoyed watching people assess the art, determining how close they can stand to it, touch it, or move around it. She said "*I like watching that, so I feel like every time you get to watch people doing something like that you're learning" (*Raw data, p. 246). Evan (H) said the large crowds affected his ability to see *City Mail*.

Tristan (M) photographed a stranger from a distance viewing art in an exhibition at the AGNS (figure 7). He explained that while he was not particularly interested in the artworks, he valued the notion that there is something for everyone to enjoy at Nocturne. He felt that the photograph encapsulated his experience at Nocturne.

5.2.2.2.2. Interactions with artists, interpreters, or volunteers.
None of the participants took a guided tour by foot or bicycle of the downtown area. However, participants who engaged in conversation with artists or volunteers expressed having had very positive experiences. Gail (L) said the quality of her experiences with specific artworks increased dramatically when she had conversations with the artists. She asserted that after speaking with the artist, she felt much less confused, which increased her appreciation of the artist's work. She also commented that the conversation about the work was insightful and more interesting than what the program described. She would have preferred to have artists at all the locations.

Jeff (L) also benefitted from speaking with the artist at the ArtsExpress exhibition and was able to understand the details of the project including who made it, how and why it was created.

5.2.3. Physical Context

5.2.3.1. Where they decided to go and why.

Becky (L), Kevin (H), and Jeff (L) parked their cars in Zone 3 (figure 1) and walked around the downtown area. Becky (L) chose to explore the zone where the University she attends is located in Zone 3 because she is familiar with that area. Sue (H) walked from her North end neighbourhood, through the Public Gardens to the Spring Garden Road area. Anne (M) and Tristan (M) had dinner downtown and then selected an area on the map with the highest concentration of projects. Abby (H) and Evan (H) essentially visited every zone they could reach by foot including the Spring Garden Area, Barrington St, Granville Street, and the South Waterfront (figure 1). Matt (H) and Rita (M) attended with friends who had a car therefore they decided to visit the extremities of the event, such as Veith St. Gallery, South Waterfront, Quinpool Rd. and the Nova Scotia Archives. Gail (L) began at a friend's house downtown, walked along Barrington to the South Waterfront, and back downtown via the waterfront boardwalk.

None of the participants said they went to the Dalhousie University Art Gallery or the Saint Mary's University Art Gallery, two large galleries located in South end Halifax. Also, none of the participants went across the harbour to Dartmouth. None of the participants utilized the free public transit.

Participants who were well informed about the art community had specific destinations they wanted to reach throughout the night (e.g. Sue, Abby, and Kevin). Individuals with less experience selected an area to begin their evening and moved to subsequent projects as they visited, with certain artworks in mind that they would like to visit (e.g. Jeff, Becky, and Gail).

5.2.3.2. Use of map and program guide.

All participants said that they made use of the program guide and map during the night. Most people planned ahead and made reference to it while they were at specific projects or venues, seeking more information. Jeff (L) did not plan ahead, but wished he had. Kevin (H) had the most criticisms for the program. He suggested that it was more of a catalogue than a guide and that the maps were fairly generic. Matt (H) appreciated that it was not full of art jargon.

5.2.3.3. Signage.

Three participants found the signs very useful because it helped them to know which zone they were in, the signs helped indicate when they were approaching a specific project, and also aided to distinguish between participating venues from businesses that are simply open for the event. Matt (H) advocated for signs to be better lit and more visible, similar to labels in galleries. Referring to street art and the lack of signage, he said, *"if it's obscure to begin with, there's no need to sort of double the obscurity… they perhaps should have had someone there who explained it, either that, or I'll just take it for what it was" (*Raw data, p.288).

Anne (M) and Tristan (M) had difficulty finding and using signs in the Barrington St. area. Kevin (H) and Evan (H) would have liked to see the signs and projects to be organized numerically along the street, so that it would be easier to correlate the program with the geographic location of the projects and galleries. None of the participants commented on the didactic panels displayed at certain galleries, venues or anchor projects.

5.2.3.4. Atmosphere.

According to most of the participants, the overall atmosphere at Nocturne was a significant factor in the quality of their experiences. Many people cited this as one of the key elements they enjoyed about the event. Participants also noted their particular enjoyment in observing the mass of people out in the streets, appreciating art, and engaging in a community event.

For Evan (H), the atmosphere and act of moving through the city at Nocturne are important components of the experience. He stated that

> *I knew I liked Nocturne and it was at night… to me it's kind of a neat experience, travelling in the dark… you experience a lot of one little spot and then you travel in the dark to the next one and it's kind of like a new fresh experience, and I like the idea of emerging from nothingness to find all this stuff, it's like 'wow this is great'* (Raw Data, p. 404).

5.2.3.5. Relationship to art galleries.

5.2.3.5.1. How galleries differ from Nocturne.

When asked to elaborate on how viewing art at Nocturne differs from viewing art in an art gallery or similar performance space, participants cited dissimilarities relating to the personal, social, and physical aspects of art viewing.

Becky (L) stated that artists would need to take both the physical conditions of the installation site and the time in which the work would be exhibited (night time) into consideration when they designed the artworks for Nocturne. Matt (H) mentioned that there is too much to visit and that it is difficult to see the art because it is dark. Nonetheless, Nocturne encouraged him to enter galleries he had been meaning to visit. Two participants assumed that galleries would not exhibit some types of art featured at Nocturne, such as performances. Jeff thought the event was welcoming to him even

without a background in the arts. Participants described their experiences as being more interactive, participatory, explorative, comfortable, relaxing and spontaneous than they would be if they had taken place in a gallery. It was said, that people can attend with an open mind, and witness a variety of artworks. Sue (H) pointed out that the audience is not fixed. She explained that visitors have the ability to leave a venue if they are not interested in the performance. As a result, people may not receive the "full effect" if they are *"just passing through trying to check it off the list"* (Raw data, p.179).

5.2.3.6. Changes in perception of a place

Few participants thought Nocturne changed their perception of a place in the city. However, Becky (L) and Jeff (L), for example, thought the *ArtsExpress* project in the Provincial Law Courts changed how that institutional space usually feels.

Kevin was pleased to have gone to the Khyber. He had been meaning to go for some time. He felt he would return, now that he had experienced it for the first time. Evan (H) and Tristan (M) both stated that Nocturne introduced them to gallery spaces on Barrington St. that they did not know existed. Abby (H) expressed her interest in exploring the South waterfront more often. Initially, Sue (H) did not think the experience of Nocturne changed her perception of a place in the city, aside for perhaps accessing the Public Gardens at night.

Tristan (M) spoke about an unofficial project he witnessed at Nocturne. The artist(s) had woven cloth between the spokes of a chain link fence surrounding the recently appointed location for a potential new Convention Centre in downtown Halifax. The strips of cloth spelt "Culture not convention" and a slide show of images was projected on the basement wall of the demolished building site. This evoked many ideas

about civic progress, contestation, and culture in Halifax for Tristan. He compared his pre-event interview comments about wanting to see if Halifax had 'grown up' since he lived here with his post-event comments about the public's reluctance toward progress. He argued that he expected the arts community to be more progressive in their desire for change in the city. Instead, he claimed they appear to be averse to change, and he proposed that more developments which include cultural spaces and green spaces would make areas of the city more spectacular.

5.2.3.7. Thinking differently about Halifax.

Most people did not consider attending Nocturne to have changed how they think about or perceive the city of Halifax. However, a renewed appreciation for living in Halifax was a prevalent theme among participants' responses. These included feelings of gratitude for living here, for having Halifax host this type of event, which is special to the specific city. Anne (M) also said that being at the event reinforced feelings of personal security, which she explained is at the core of being happy in your city. Evan (H) was glad to see so many people in the downtown area, particularly on Barrington Street, which has been facing many closures.

Another common response related to a sense of community in Halifax. Participants liked the feeling of community that Nocturne created, and were excited by the number of artists participating, and the number of people out supporting the arts. It also reminded Rita (M) that events that encourage people to enjoy activities together should be occurring more often. Kevin liked supporting community organizations and learning more about his new city.

5.2.3.8. Time.

Time was a substantial factor in people's experiences and was discussed often throughout the interviews. Particularly Matt (H), Rita (M) and Sue (H) said there were far too many artworks and not enough time to appreciate them. Becky (L) wished she had allocated more time to spend at Nocturne. Evan (H) and Abby (H) felt rushed because they had a limited amount of time with their friend before he had to go to his shift as a volunteer at a venue. Rita (M) and Gail (L) both suggested that the event last two or three days, so that visitors could go to multiple zones and take in more projects.

5.2.3.9. Reinforcing events or experiences after Nocturne

5.2.3.9.1. Encounters with others after Nocturne.

Three participants talked about sharing their experiences at Nocturne with other people. Both Becky (L) and Abby (H) spoke about showing their photographs to their mothers, and telling them about their night. Gail (L) mentioned that she wanted to send a copy of the keepsake photograph she created with her friends to their friend out of province. Tristan (M) mentioned reading The Coast (Halifax' independently weekly newspaper) after the event, and learning about other artworks that he did not see that night.

5.2.3.9.2. Plans to visit a gallery in the near future.

When asked whether participants had plans to visit a gallery in the near future, many of the participants who most often visited galleries in the past assumed that they did or that they would be making plans to do so (e.g. Matt, Rita, Sue, Abby). Kevin (H) had specific plans to return to the AGNS as they did not have time to visit at Nocturne. Jeff (L) thought that he probably would, whereas Becky (L) did not think she would be making

plans. Gail (L) seemed reluctant about the potential of visiting a gallery. She reiterated that it is a matter of comfort and she often feels that she speaks too loudly, and would interrupt the concentration of other visitors.

5.2.3.9.3. Plans to attend Nocturne in the future.

Ten out of 11 participants said they wanted to attend Nocturne again. Anne (M) was the only participant who mentioned that perhaps she would not go in the future. Anne would probably attend if someone wanted her to go with them and if she was not busy that night. She enjoyed her experience but did not feel compelled to attend the event again. On the other hand, Gail (L) started making plans for the upcoming year. She expected this year to be a stroll through Halifax casually looking at art. Becky (L) looked forward to attending again next year, saying that it "*opened a door*" (Raw data, p. 113) for her to go again.

The two previous chapters describing the pre-event and post-event results conclude the presentation of research findings from this project. In the proceeding chapter, I will discuss the significance and impact of the various factors that influenced the participants' learning experiences at Nocturne.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1.   Personal Context

6.1.1. Past experience.

The results of this study indicate that past experience is influential but not necessary to

having meaningful experiences with art. Using constructivist principles, we can

determine from the responses of the participants that all 11 individuals engaged in a form

of meaning-making during and after the time spent visiting the Nocturne event. Hein

(1998) wrote, "visitors do not learn but make their own meaning from their experiences"

(p. 136). Within the personal context, the role previous knowledge, experience, and

interest play in determining meaningful experiences with art at Nocturne is exemplified

by participants in this study.

Participants with more art viewing experience were able to develop deeper

interpretations of particular works, (e.g. Kevin with *City Mail*). This may be attributed to

existing interpretation skills and strategies (Lachapelle, 2008), an ability to identify and

group larger concepts (Falk and Dierking, 2000), and an aptitude for perceiving a large

scope of elements or physicality of a piece (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1995).

Experts with more art viewing experience have a greater knowledge base about art to

draw from (Koroscik, 1996). Their knowledge of a subject is often organized and easily

retrievable for use in particular contexts (Koroscik, 1993). As a result, learners with

adequate experience and skills can employ "knowledge-seeking strategies, [which]… are

the cognitive steps a person takes to construct new understandings and to direct the

search for new knowledge, thereby facilitating the individual's use of his or her

knowledge base" (Koroscik, 1996 p. 9). As we can see from the responses of participants

with more past experiences with art, they have a knowledge base that includes

information about contemporary art that they can draw from and to make interpretations.

Nonetheless, it appears that participants with less art viewing experience also had

meaningful encounters with the art, particularly when additional resources were made

available to the learner. According to Lachapelle (2003), while an educational

background in art can greatly assist with the comprehension and judgement of a variety

of art forms, a post-secondary education in any discipline can also serve as a base for the

appreciation of art. Based on the backgrounds of the participants, it is clear that a

background in fine arts is not essential for appreciating art on meaningful levels.

Participants' most salient experiences were those that evoked memories, thoughts, and

alternative perceptions on viewing art.

Within the context of Nocturne, which places art in everyday spaces, participants

are able to draw on their base knowledge of the city as a point of departure for

comprehending the works of art. Novice viewers often draw on their everyday

experiences because they simply do not possess specific field related knowledge

(Lachapelle, 2008). This research suggests that the context created by the event allows

viewers with all levels of experience to enter into the familiar realm of the city, and make

meaning based on their existing knowledge bases and personal expertise or interests.

6.1.2. Motivations and expectations.

6.1.2.1. Motivations.

Considering all participants cited reasons relating to *intrinsic motivations* (Falk and

Dierking, 2000) for wanting to attend Nocturne, suggests that participants anticipated

encounters that would be fulfilling and personally satisfying because they are likely interested in the experience itself (Falk and Dierking, 1992; 2000). Participants' motivations for attending Nocturne were closely affiliated with learning and entertainment which implies that the participants may desire "a more 'gentle' form of art education" (Axelsen, 2006, p.36).

6.1.2.2. Expectations.

Expectations, based on the combination of motivations, interest, and past museum experience, affect learning because they prepare the attendee for the visit (Falk and Dierking, 2000). This research indicates that expectations had a formative role on the quality of participants' experiences. The degree of variability in the expectations of the participants was associated with the attitudes and perceptions experienced during the event. As such, participants who attended the event in previous years and who possibly have more art viewing skills might likely have more productive learning experiences. This might be because they have prior art related experience and knowledge that prepares them for encountering a new situation in the form of expectations (Falk and Dierking, 2000). However, the results of this study suggest that this did not appear to be the case. Rather, participants who were familiar with what to expect, expressed having enjoyed themselves but also that aspects of the event did not meet with their expectations.

Remarkably, participants with less experience viewing art (such as Jeff, Tristan, and Becky for example) seemed to have had their expectations met or exceeded. This can be attributed to the fact that the entire experience was a new and novel event in their lives and therefore these participants have little or nothing else to compare it to. These factors may have made the entire experience special.

Regardless of their level of experience, participants' expectations of the event, specific artworks, or anchor projects, also illustrate a very crucial aspect of the dynamic relationship between the Nocturne event and the attending public. New audiences, who are likely gaining a preliminary introduction to Halifax' art community, may leave Nocturne with a skewed understanding of what contemporary art is, after witnessing an enlivened version of the arts community. In a similar vein, if members of the public hold extremely high expectations for specific installations or anchor projects, and are left feeling unfulfilled, then it may be to the detriment to their overall appreciation and interest in contemporary art in their city. Granted, events of such magnitude cannot cater to the expectations of all attendees. Nonetheless, these findings suggest that participants wish to attend such events, that they want to seek art related entertainment and learning opportunities, and that their interest in art can be facilitated in order to allow meaningful experiences to take shape.

6.1.3. Exposure to a diversity of art and venues.

As Koroscik, Short, and Stavropoulos (1992) indicated, "comparative art contexts may provide implicit cues that guide the viewers' search for meaning" (p. 154). The opportunity to visit various projects, galleries, and installations allowed participants to make comparisons and identify shared characteristics among the artworks encountered throughout the evening. In fact, one of the most notable elements to influence the learning experience of attendees was exposure to multiple art forms and venues during Nocturne.

A good example of this is illustrated by Matt (H)'s experience at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia after having visited the Veith St. Gallery earlier in the night. Matt's

ability to identify and link themes between exhibitions in different galleries is likely due

to his ability to perceive associations between several works, and not just individual

pieces. This allowed him to *"chunk the contents in higher-order categories"* (Falk and

Dierking, 2000, p. 120*).* This suggests that his past experience looking at art gave him the

skills necessary to 'chunk' ideas. While the ability to chunk is seen as an expert skill,

Matt (H) appears to use the strategy to develop his appreciation for novice artists, and to

reinforce his understanding of the contemporary art world.

Evan (H)'s involvement in numerous participatory projects, as well as visiting

contemporary art galleries allowed him to reaffirm and cultivate his tastes in art. Many of

his encounters were highly entertaining, captivating and required his active participation.

Lachapelle (2010) identified these forms of engagement as key strategies in encouraging

public support for public art. As a result of Evan (H)'s participation, the mysticism he

associated with artists creating works in isolation was dissolved. His understanding of

public art expanded to include participatory art as well, whereby the viewer creates the

meaning of the artwork through their active involvement in the meaning making process.

The relationships created between select artists and viewers at Nocturne highlight one of

Bishop's (2006) descriptions of participatory art. Evan's participation in *City Mail* and

Prime Life Time, for example, helped him to identify that his role in the meaning of the

work becomes equal to that of the artist. His participation renders the work "more

egalitarian and democratic than the creation of a work by a single artist" (Bishop, 2006,

p.12) In addition, these newly developed ideas are precisely what Desai (2002) expressed

in her discussion of ethnographic approaches to art education which dismantle long-held

modernist beliefs about the hierarchical relationship between the artist and the viewer.

6.1.4. Choice and control.

Possessing the choice and control within a learning environment gives a sense of responsibly and feelings of empowered (Falk and Dierking, 2000). This sense of choice and control was realized by a number of participants who commented that they appreciated their ability to direct their own experience throughout the evening. Similar to Packer's (2008) findings, a range of options allows people to express their own interests and to select works that are compatible with their abilities. The freedom to select which works to engage with also encouraged attendees to become more in tune with their own personal tastes and interests. The high number of projects at the city wide art event enabled participants to see a large number of artworks in a short period of time. With more options, participants can feel motivated, engaged, and stimulated (Axelsen, 2006a). This is similar to Lachapelle's (2009) findings, where participants in the study performed significantly well when given the option to select which works to engage with. The flexibility to control their level of engagement with the works was a positive attribute in the quality of participants' experiences at Nocturne. In their encounters with works of public art, members of the public rarely decide which works they encounter or engage with and that comes with added frustration and contention (Lachapelle, 2010). Many of the participants in this study indicated that the ability to choose from a large array of works allowed viewers to experience many works in a non-committal fashion, as Tristan (M) and Kevin (H) pointed out in the interviews. One could assume that the short time period of the festival and the variety of works to choose from are seen to be beneficial to the public, rather than expressions of frustration towards public art. This suggests that Nocturne provides a good introduction to numerous art forms in the city, which can be seen in Anne (M)'s comparison of Nocturne to speed dating. Yet, the large numbers of

works to choose from encouraged participants to engage with these works in a superficial manner.

Lachapelle's (2009) study found that participants performed significantly better when given additional time to explore a work of art. More specifically, in a first activity, when participants were asked to freely select works to discuss, participants' selected many works and spoke briefly about each. Whereas, in a second activity, when asked to select one work and look at it longer, the participants' interpretations were more thoughtful and developed. Similar findings can be seen in this research, where participants' choices and the length of time committed to viewing specific artworks affected their ability to come to substantial interpretations of particular artworks.

While choice and control are seen as a very positive component of their experiences with art, the potential remains for participants to simply engage in a shallow experience of the art. Rather than investing productive time to reflect on the work, and develop a hypothesis about its meaning (Lachapelle, 2009), participants always have the freedom to leave without giving the work further consideration. Participants can sometimes make initial, superficial, judgments without considering the artwork in any depth. Without resources to facilitate a more considerate response, participants may form shallow understandings of the art in certain situations.

6.1.5. Reaffirmation and increased appreciation.

Falk and Dierking (2000) identified an increased appreciation for a topic or subject as a result of learning. This is evident in the responses of many participants who claimed to have a renewed or rejuvenated appreciation for art and the work of artists in their city.

Nocturne creates a forum for individuals to reinvigorate an appreciation for art and to reaffirm existing beliefs about art.

Many of the more experienced participants stated that their time at Nocturne did not change their understanding of contemporary art. This is not surprising, considering they have an existing body of knowledge that is often difficult to challenge. Falk and Dierking (2000) iterate that museum visitors often use their experiences at museums to "confirm pre-existing understandings than to build new knowledge structures" (p. 84). Within the constructivist paradigm, knowledge builds upon previous experiences (Hein, G.E. 1998). Therefore regardless of whether the participants felt they acquired new information or facts, learning has likely occurred simply through the accommodation of new experiences within an existing body of knowledge (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969).

It is important to note a significant point of concern regarding particular findings that emerged from this study. Gail (L) and Becky (L) both mentioned having difficulty acknowledging specific projects as art. Becky (L) found it particularly challenging to reconcile her previously held beliefs about art with what she experienced. According to Koroscik, (1993) "resistance occurs, at least in part, because the learner does not possess a repertoire of useful knowledge-seeking strategies" (p.). The general public consists of a spectrum of individual people, with diverse backgrounds and specialized knowledge bases. We can determine that Nocturne likely draws members of the public with varying levels of experience with art, as seen in the range of participants in this study. It is not surprising that learners with different knowledge bases would not possess the knowledge-seeking strategies necessary for fully comprehending visual art.

Significantly, in some contexts visitors may interpret their inability to 'decode' what they encounter as a personal failing or a result of their lack of education. This sense of personal inadequacy and embarrassment may go some way towards explaining the hostility and dismissal sometimes expressed towards works of art, especially contemporary art. The alternative response is often to find the fault within the artwork because of a failure to recognize the intellectual codes in operation – 'it's meaningless and therefore it isn't art' might be a typical reaction. (Mason, 2005 p. 210)

Aspects of the above statement can be found in my discussions with the participants during the post-event interviews. Participants in this study may be dismissing artworks because of insufficient skills to recognize them as art, as described above by Mason (2005). Equally troubling is the notion that viewers at these events are sometimes led to believe that the artworks exhibited are art simply because of their exhibition context rather than on the basis of artistic merit. This is precisely one of the concerns Banh (2009) expresses regarding the potential for the public to thoughtlessly accept the installations as art. These findings simply reiterate the necessity of additional contextual resources that encourage viewers to develop their own knowledge-seeking strategies, which may help to reduce the confusion and discomfort that arises from encountering contemporary art (Wolcott, 1996).

Sue (L)'s assertion that her understanding of contemporary art did not change as a result of her visit to Nocturne is not surprising considering she reported having already reached her own conclusions about what contemporary art is during the pre-event interview. According to Adams, et al. (2003), "learners start from different cognitive frameworks and build on learning experience to create unique, highly individualized schemas" (p.16). Granted, participating in an interview may have contributed to her decision to maintain her previously held definition. Regardless of this however, her experiences with various artworks during her visit to Nocturne imply that her later

experiences will build upon her existing, pre-event understanding of contemporary art. Ideally, the knowledge and meaning that she constructed at the time of the Nocturne event will subsequently be expanded upon in future situations as her understandings of contemporary art continuously become more refined.

6.2. Social Context

6.2.1. Learning in groups.

Looking to theories of learning from museum education can help to determine the nature of the learning experience from the sociocultural context. Interacting with friends or a partner is an integral part of the museum experience (Coffee, 2007). Attending the event in groups of two appears to be the ideal dynamic for the participants of this study. Although viewing artworks with many other people allows for more interpretations to arise and be exchanged (Falk and Dierking, 2000), it appears that pairs may have had more productive learning experiences. Much like social behaviours revealed in museums, where peers and friends establish and share commonalities and differences of opinions, tastes, and points of view (Lankford, 2002), participants in this study also constructed meaning from the works based on their collective experiences and exchanges.

Evidently, participants spoke casually about the works but not necessarily with great depth. Gail (L)'s comment that she and her friends discussed the work, particularly when they did not understand what it was about, exemplifies the value of the social component in the art viewing experience, as it facilitates learning through the group dynamic, by establishing interpretations based on evolving comments and discussions (Mayer, 2005 b).

Among Banh's (2009) suggestions for the relevancy and sustainability of Nuit Blanche events was an emphasis on the importance and notion of critical discourse surrounding the artworks. The fact that participants spoke casually about the work, suggests that the public, most notably those without an extensive background in the arts, are likely not speaking as critically about the art as authors such as Banh (2009) had expected. This may be attributed to various factors such as the quality of the artworks, their subject matter, lack of educational resources provided by the event, or the fact that viewers may not have the interpretation skills necessary to reflect critically and thoughtfully on the artworks.

The company kept during the event was an influential factor in the overall quality of participants' experiences with the social context. It allowed for participants to feel comfortable in their surroundings and to model other more experienced visitors. Falk and Dierking's (1992; 2000) description of modelling from others is particularly articulated in Jeff's (L) comment about observing and modelling the behaviour of other visitors. Being surrounded by attendees helped participants to develop, alter, or affirm their understanding and opinions of particular artworks, in much the same ways that it occurs in museums (Coffee, 2007). For Matt (H) observing how the models at NSCAD interacted with the public helped to alter his understanding of public art.

6.2.2. Learning from artists.

As indicated by Axelson's (2006 a) study, participants appreciate interacting with art professionals because "it helps to break down the image that art is inaccessible and only for the elite" (p. 35). In addition to being influenced by people and peers, interactions with artists or volunteers were seen to be a hugely impactful element of their experience

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with art at Nocturne. Interactions with artists facilitated the formation of opinions, understandings and appreciation of particular artworks. In these instances, the participants spoke at length about the processes used or the meaning of artworks and exhibits. Evidently, these are important occurrences at Nocturne, and highlight the notion that "a little additional information may be all that is required to assist a somewhat skilled non-expert viewer in successfully interpreting works of art" (Lachapelle, 2003, p. 80). The successful outcomes from engaging directly with artists appear to have twofold benefits; an increased appreciation and understanding from the viewer, and the portrayal of art as approachable and accessible.

6.3.   Physical Context

6.3.1. Time.

Due to the temporal limits of the festival, participants were compelled to visit a large number of projects in a minimal time span. This allowed participants to see a variety of different projects during the night. This appears to be advantageous for participants with less art viewing experience because it introduced them to many types of art in a relatively short time period. On the other hand, the restricted time span caused participants to feel rushed and led to hurried looking. Similar findings, stated by Packer (2008) specified that visitors to museums had more efficacious learning when they did not feel hurried or rushed. As many participants in this study indicated, the limited amount of time was an added pressure that did not contribute productively to their evening. Time is an inherent component of the festival that was hugely influential to participants' experiences with art at Nocturne. In some cases, the element of time worked in participants' favour, whereas for others, limited time was a detriment. Lachapelle, Douesnard, and Keenlyside (2009)

found that non- expert viewers realized more comprehensive understandings of contemporary public art "only after sustained and cumulative exploration of the work of art" (p.252.). Based on the comments provided by participants in this study, hurried looking may be preventing attendees from formulating hypotheses and more meaningful understandings of the artworks (Lachapelle et al. 2009).

6.3.2. Atmosphere: Festival and artworks.

Koroscik's (1996) reiteration that the study of art is indivisibly situated to the place in which it occurs is apparent when examining the physical contexts that influence learning at temporary public art events. The atmosphere created by the festival facilitated learning in numerous ways, particularly because it formed a welcoming environment to interact with contemporary art. Axelsen (2006 a) associated the excitement of being surrounded by enthusiastic people as one of the merits of special events at galleries for visitors.

Axelsens' (2006 a) findings recognized that special events removed the stigma that galleries are boring and uneventful. When participants in Axelsens' study felt more like participants, rather than simply spectators, they were increasingly more comfortable and excited about being involved with something (Axelsen, 2006). The same can be seen in the responses of participants in this study who valued the atmosphere and festive feeling of the event. The results of this study closely resemble many findings identified by Jiwa, Coca-Stefaniak, Blackwell and Toyubur's (2009) study of the international Nuit Blanche phenomenon. For example, the atmosphere created by the festival enhanced the sense of community, the sense of being involved in something together, and allowed exchanges to occur among attendees.

Nocturne's festive atmosphere was seen by the participants as an advantage to their experience. This raises an important point for consideration. In larger cities such as Toronto, the party-like atmosphere appears to have possibly deterred from the quality of the experience. Nonetheless, in this instance, ambient atmosphere created from the combination of entertainment and learning appears to be an effective factor for art education within this particular case study. Packer's (2008) study also found that ambiance in an art viewing setting can facilitate learning. The environment created was exciting and encouraging for participants, thus conducive to learning.

6.3.2.1. Perceptions of place and the city.

Although many participants did not believe the event changed their perceptions of Halifax, their comments do provide further insight into how the event may have informed their understanding of particular areas or spaces in the city. Accessibility was among the most notable factors in changing their perception of specific places (i.e. the Public Gardens, or the law courts). In addition, being introduced to new venues appears to have also altered their experiences of certain places.

The transformation of empty storefronts or demolished construction sites into art installations sites helped viewers identify issues related to urban development and society. This is best illustrated in Tristan (M)'s beliefs about buildings developments in Halifax and the reluctance shared by many citizens regarding progress in the downtown area. These ideas typify many of the key comments expressed by Banh (2009) in terms of using cultural arts events as a catalyst for discussing urban issues. Matt (H) conveys similar ideas in his comment about the event serving as a reminder to municipal politicians of the strengths and viability of the city.

Some participants mentioned feeling invigorated by their experiences and this increased their appreciation for their city. It instilled a sense of community and reminded participants of the value and necessity of initiatives that encourage the public to participate in community events, as well as re-visioning the purpose or intended purpose of places. These sentiments are communicated in Alves's (2007) research about cultural enterprises acting as a means for challenging previously held assumptions about spaces and cities.

6.3.2.2. Physicality of artworks.

The physical context has a significant bearing on the viewer in both positive and negative ways (Hein, G. 1998). The quality of experience was affected by the general atmosphere as well as the physical conditions of specific artworks. For some participants, the physical context of certain works, (such as Kevin (H) with *Apprivoiser la Foudre*, and Evan (H) at the Public Gardens), was so influential that it impacted their appreciation of artworks positively or negatively.

Based on Abby's (H) experience participating in *Prime Time Life*, her excitement and the surrounding atmosphere had a hugely affirmative impression on her enjoyment and appreciation of the piece. So much so that it may have been what contributed to her lack of hesitation at the notion of dressing up and performing a scene. Being in the moment and interacting with strangers may enunciate the same "unconstrained relations" described by Alves' (2007) study of the social benefits associated with engaging with art in the context of city wide art events.

Ellsworth (2005) explained that encounters with pedagogical places provoke the learning self, because they entice novel ideas and feelings to transpire. Abby's behaviour suggests that the environment created by the artist allowed her to feel so excited, engaged, and comfortable that she temporarily disregarded any ideas or hesitations she previously held towards performing publicly. Ellsworth (2005) explained that the learning self gives "form to the sensation of simultaneously being with oneself *and* being in relation to things, people, or ideas outside of oneself" (p.16). The act of being concurrently connected to oneself and their environment is apparent in Abby's (H) experience. Lachapelle (2003) argues that a positive attitude toward learning can make a significant impact on the learning experience. This is evident in Abby's positive and open attitude regarding Nocturne and the outcome of many of her encounters with contemporary art.

The conditions created by Andrew Hicks in the 3D stereoscopic installation, also played a significant role in Tristan (M) and Anne (M)'s enjoyment of the 3D videos. The clarity with which Tristan could recount the details of the space and his experience in the room illustrates the pervasive role the physical context plays in the art viewing and remembering experience (Falk and Dierking, 2000). "All of the elements of an environment are interconnected within the experience of learners who cannot help but perceive those environmental elements through unique lenses formed by a combination of background experiences and inherent aptitudes" (Lankford, 2002, p. 145). Despite not having a background in art, participants were enlightened to new and novel aesthetic experiences and ideas through their direct, physical engagement with contemporary art.

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The physicality of particular projects also left a significant impression on Jeff (L) and Becky (L) in terms of their respective understandings and expanded knowledge of contemporary art practices and forms. It is noteworthy that Becky was able to realize that artists would need to consider the space and time in which their artworks would be displayed when they conceptualized an installation. As Lachapelle stated, site specific artworks can create confusion for viewers because it utilizes space in ways that detract from the traditional concept of public art on a pedestal. Making the association between artwork and site is "critical for the reception and appreciation of site-specific artworks" (p.149) and it can be challenging to identify the correlation (Lachapelle, 2010). However, Becky's observation suggests that she understands the concept of site specificity and the importance that site plays in the conception of an artwork.

The expansion of knowledge exhibited by participants with less art viewing experience suggests that their experiences at Nocturne may have been a rewarding introduction into various art forms like installation art or site specific art, not already known to participants. Nocturne creates a venue for people with less experience with art to engage with various types of art, and to "invent personal knowledge and explore new ideas and concepts" (Soren, 2009). The open nature of the event also allowed participants to build and generate understanding based on existing experience and knowledge.

6.3.3. Perceptions of galleries, art world and Nocturne.

Participants' perceptions of Nocturne as a community art event intended for everyone are noteworthy, considering some of the observations that a selection of participants shared about the art world, galleries, and artistic activity. Some of the ideas participants divulged related to people feeling uncomfortable or insecure in galleries, that art can

sometimes be inaccessible, that the art world is too challenging to understand, or that visitors must be informed and critical when they visit galleries. Nonetheless, all the participants were drawn to Nocturne because they perceived it as an experience with art that is welcoming to audiences with diverse backgrounds.

Outcomes from Axelsen's (2006 a) study on visitor perceptions indicated that special events are seen to make galleries more inclusive to a larger segment of the population. While attracting a wider segment of the population to special events encourages diverse audiences, Axelsen (2006a) explains that populist events can also result in the over simplification that sometimes occurs in galleries, specifically at events. This may be what Tristan insinuates in his comment about the event not being for art experts. Nonetheless the participants' in Axelsens' (2006a) study believed that special events break down barriers and removes the "mystique and perceived elitism" (p.30) associated with galleries. According to a number of participants in this study, there is a perceived barrier and that the potential to dissolve it rests in events such as Nocturne.

6.3.3.1. Galleries.

Participants did not express having encountered many of the impositions perceived to exist in museums or galleries, such as needing to appear knowledgeable and thinking critically about the art. Participants felt at ease while engaging with art at Nocturne. Without having to follow expected gallery-viewing conventions, the participants felt open, willing, and free to explore. However, their responses suggest that perhaps attendees do not look critically at the art, because they are not expected to. While it is perfectly acceptable to enjoy and appreciate art on various levels without the mediation

of additional reading or interpreters, it is worth considering strategies that can support learners in this open, free choice learning environment.

Lankfords (2002) commented that the aim of constructivist museums is "capturing the imagination, provoking thought, stimulating the curiosity, and connecting with the prior experience of each museum visitor" (p.146) is echoed in many aspects of the most productive learning experiences at Nocturne. The experiences of participants at Veith St. Gallery epitomize the ideal conditions for art viewing at galleries within the specific context of the night time art event. Specifically, the opportunity to learn about the organization, speak with a staff or volunteer, interact with friends, spend a reasonable amount of time looking at the art, and the freedom to create artworks are examples of that particular setting that contributed to meaningful experiences with art.

6.3.4. Navigation and resources.

Banh (2009) argues that the art exhibited at events such as Nuit Blanche must be socially relevant, and that attendees must comprehend the cultural context in which the art was created. But as Erickson and Villeneuve (2008) point out, most people do not possess adequate knowledge about the contemporary art world to understand how culture and society influence art production. As we can see from the experiences of the participants, people relied on program descriptions, maps and signage to make sense of what they are experiencing.

Without contextual information about the factors that shape, inform, or inspire difficult art works, participants were at a loss for apprehending their significance and relevancy to the event and art world in general. This further strengthens the importance of

providing additional information in the form of comprehensive program descriptions, clear maps, or adequate event signage for navigating the city. As well, cues for enticing and prompting knowledge seeking strategies (Koroscik, 1992) could also facilitate participants' understanding of artworks. Otherwise, attendees may simply "*take it for what it is*" (Raw data, p.288), as Matt (H) commented.

Projects within the Nocturne event utilize specific well known sites (like store fronts, law courts, public gardens, and parking lots). Like many forms of site specific art that respond directly to the physical or conceptual locations where they are displayed, artists integrate aspects of the specific site into the meaning of the piece (Kwon, 2002). The artworks art featured in Nocturne do not exist only in the confines of institutions, but in the realm of the everyday person, in shared public locations. In many cases, participants were able to draw their own interpretations and judgements based on the recognizable features of the exhibition site. Based on Falk and Dierking's (2000) description of advance organizers, distinguishable exhibition sites at Nocturne such as the Public Gardens, the future site for the library, or the law courts, can act as advance organizers that prepare the public for what they may experience at the event based on the participants' previously held knowledge of those places. As Hein (1998) described "informing them explicitly in advance what they are going to see, what they might find, or what the intention of the exhibition is, makes visitors more comfortable, more able to engage with the exhibitions and, therefore, better able to learn" (p.139). In a similar vein, the recognizable elements of the site may facilitate the transfer of knowledge by drawing on contextual cues that connect experience from previous situations (Koroscik, et al. 1992) to be applied to the participants' encounters with art at the time of the event.

The outcomes of this study propose that the physical conditions of the city also affected participants, specifically in terms of their comfort levels at the event. We can speculate that the city, as a large scale exhibition space, acts a behaviour setting already understood by participants (Falk and Dierking, 2000). Unlike galleries, which may expect certain behaviours unknown to new audiences, the city does not require the participants to behave any differently than they would any other day.

It is noteworthy that participants, less familiar with what to expect, began their evening in familiar zones. People are drawn to the things that are familiar to them (Falk and Dierking, 2000). Participants with more experience, had specific destinations in mind, much like a "search image" (Falk and Dierking, 2000, p. 118) that directed the course for the majority of their night. Less experienced participants began in familiar areas of the city, with certain projects in mind. The transformation of the city into a novel exhibition site, in combination with the participants' pre-determined curiosities about art and artists in their city, resulted in a promising condition for an exploration and introduction of contemporary art. As Falk and Dierking (2000) explained, novel situations are favourable learning environments because they compel viewers to be curious about the unfamiliar. This is precisely what occurs with the participants in this study.

Overall, participants appear to have had rich and fulfilling experiences, whether it was an introduction to new ideas, concepts, art forms, or appreciating the aesthetic experience of artworks and event itself. Falk and Dierking (2000) explained that "humans are highly motivated to learn when they are in supporting environments; when they are engaged in meaningful activities; when they are freed from anxiety, fear, and other

negative mental states; when they have choices and control over their learning; and when the challenges of the task meet their skills" (p.32). It is evident from the results of this study that many of the factors necessary for productive learning identified by Falk and Dierking (2000) are present in the experiences of the participants. This research has also recognized the elements of the event that are a detriment to the understanding and appreciation of contemporary art by the participants, such as the limited time available to deeply and meaningfully reflect on the works, and the shortage of supplementary material, which may add to a more well-rounded understanding of the works.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This research found that participants engaged with art in the context of a temporary public art event in various and complex ways. The findings from this research made visible the positive and negative aspects of participants' experiences that affected their appreciation or understanding of contemporary art. This study identified key factors that influence learning at Nocturne, which may be applicable to other case studies as well.

7.1. Summary of Findings

Within the personal context, among the most influential aspects of participants' experiences with art at Nocturne was accredited to their past art viewing experiences and interests in art prior to the event. However, despite having little previous experience with art or not possessing a more structured knowledge base about art, participants with less experience were also capable of interacting and appreciating the artworks meaningfully. This suggests that venues such as temporary public art events provide a variety of activities and points of entry which allow viewers to engage with artworks that interest them. These activities are also closely aligned to the viewers' sensibilities and interpretation skills, while simultaneously introducing them to novel concepts and practices in the realm of contemporary art. In addition, the vast range of projects and artworks encourages participants to choose what to engage with. Choice gives the viewer the responsibility over the content of their art viewing activities and is seen to be an empowering element in their experience. Interactions with a diversity of artworks also allow participants to feel comfortable and relaxed while exploring and discovering art in their city.

The social aspects of the event also shed light on the importance of interactions with peers and artists during the art viewing experience for the participants. Conversations among the groups of visitors to Nocturne facilitated learning, bonding, and helped to reinforce personal interests and tastes. Interactions with artists greatly facilitated the learning experience because the encounters enlightened the participants' understanding, interpretation, and opinion of the artworks. In addition, being surrounded by and learning from strangers was also seen as an influential factor in their learning experience.

The physical context played a very important part in the quality of the participants' experiences during Nocturne. The atmosphere created by the festival allowed participants to feel comfortable, supported and eager to explore their surroundings. Artworks that utilized familiar spaces appeared to have facilitated the participants' appreciation and understanding based on their prior knowledge of the city, or specific sites. The conditions created by artists within particular installation projects or performances also had an impression on the viewers, and immensely shaped their appreciation of the works. This research also revealed possible perceptions that the public may have towards the art world and galleries. It highlighted which aspects of the museum or gallery visit that are conducive to learning that also appear in the context of outdoor art experiences. Overall, the Nocturne art event created a captivating and imaginative situation, free of perceived barriers between the viewer and the art community.

7.2.   Recommendations

The physical contexts in which learning takes place clearly affect the outcome of an individuals' understanding and appreciation of art. This is evident in the experiences of the participants of this study. The conditions created by the festival permitted viewers with diverse backgrounds to explore and discover contemporary art by means that were comfortable and suitable to their tastes and abilities. The familiar setting may ease some of the tension associated with viewing contemporary art and public art in traditional art viewing settings. We have seen from the motivations, expectations and interests that a desire for meaningful encounters with contemporary art existed among the participants.

While there are many components of the event that encourage, facilitate, and ease the learning process for attendees, there are aspects that are a detriment to learning. The most significant implication inhibiting learning is the element of time. The event exists in an extremely short period of time, which adds to its speciality and novelty. The brief time span of the event entices attendees to visit a diverse and large number of projects in a short period of time. However, the urgency associated with visiting numerous projects deters participants from spending thoughtful, quality time reflecting on the significance of the works, and developing a hypothesis for its interpretation (Lachapelle, 2009). Additional resources and time spent viewing specifics art works can potentially help visitors establish their thoughts and perceptions (Lachapelle, 2009; 2010; 2008). Without contextual information, some attendees may be left with a skewed understanding of art (Koroscik, 1993).

Rather than minimizing the amount of artworks exhibited, perhaps organizers could provide subtle and simple tips or cues in the form of questions or information that could be applied to an assortment and range of projects, but that improve interpretation strategies. The prompts or questions would help viewers come to their own understandings, rather than simply convey additional facts and information. These resources could act as a framework which encourages viewers to reflect more critically on the formal, social, and cultural elements that influence the work. The results of this study indicated that participants also benefited from the program guide. As such, additional information about projects would help viewers make the most of the time in front of the works, should the viewer wish to utilize the supplementary information. As well, added contextual details could help attendees manage their expectations and plan their evenings accordingly based on information provided in the program or online.

Speaking with artists, volunteers, and peers was a significant contributor to the quality of the participants' understanding and appreciation of particular artworks. This strongly indicates that events such as Nocturne can continue to capitalize on the social aspects of the experience by ensuring that artists, volunteers and interpreters remain near the artworks for attendees to learn about the work directly from those most familiar with the work. Given the apparently short period of time that visitors give to engaging with each artwork at art festivals, this could be a productive strategy for increasing art appreciation.

In order for the artworks and experiences at art events to be socially relevant, there needs to be critical dialogue following the event (Banh, 2009). This research highlights the importance of this recommendation if public art initiatives are going to be

sustained and significant. Opportunities for attendees to share and reflect on their experiences may act as reinforcing events (Falk and Dierking, 2000) that can build on and develop their knowledge of the artworks.

The pace and excitement that often dictated the outcome of participants' experience indicate that attendees likely will not invest long periods of time in reading lengthy didactic panels near art works. Nonetheless, additional information available to attendees either in the program, or on signs (as employed in Nocturne 2010, SNB, 2011) may be an asset for viewers. Furthermore, many organizations currently employ online resources such as blogs, websites, and forums that can also provide viewers with added contextual information for a more educated approach to engaging with the art before and after the event. Opportunities to exchange their ideas about the artworks with other viewers may fortify the meaning and significance of particular works after the event.

7.3.   Limitations and Future Research

There are limitations to the research conducted and presented in this thesis. This study was limited by the time span in which it occurred. Interviews were conducted in the days immediately following the event. Learning is incremental over the course of time (Adams, Falk and Dierking, 2003), therefore it does not account for how participants' experiences informed future learning. In addition, it does not examine the long term effects of the event. There are many foreseeable avenues from which further research can be derived. Future research could look critically at how reinforcing events in the days and months following the participants' encounters with art influence their learning in subsequent experiences. Research could also determine whether attendees to temporary public art events revisit galleries, or participate more frequently in their arts and culture

community. Further research could be conducted at comparable events in other cities to identify and evaluate effective strategies to facilitate learning and aesthetic experiences for attendees.

7.4. Implications

This study of the public art event, Nocturne, does not intend to suggest that museums would also benefit from adopting festive strategies for the sake of attracting or educating new audiences. Rather, this research allows for a comparison to be drawn between traditional art viewing conditions and the more ephemeral forms of art viewing at festivals to assess the possible impact these different strategies have on public perceptions of art, and what efforts can be made to render art more accessible. In turn, understanding the implications of temporary public art events can determine the nature and quality of the individual learning experiences at these events.

As a pedagogical tool, temporary public art events can be an effective means of art education. Through interactions and participation in numerous projects that require the active involvement of participants, experience becomes educational. Despite the temporality of theses cultural initiatives, they expose and introduce the public to numerous forms of art, ideas, and issues relevant to citizens in contemporary society. Ideally these implications are pertinent beyond the limits of the event.

The economic and logistical investment associated with producing these events requires analysis into their significance at institutional and individual levels if community initiatives like Nocturne are going to be viable as both a professional contemporary art event and as an inviting community event. Cheney (2010) makes the point that if the arts

are going to have a solid argument for receiving public support, then attention must be paid to how the arts impact the individual. Otherwise, few arguments for the arts are going to successfully garner support from the everyday person (Cheney, 2010). Lankford (2002) writes that the advantages of an aesthetic experience comprise of "the development of cognitive, affective, perceptual, sensory and empathetic aptitudes. … Aesthetic experience, by directly benefitting individuals, benefits society. The more people able to engage with art in such a way as to attain aesthetic experience, the richer and fuller will be the life of the arts and culture in society as appreciation and support for the arts will doubtless increase" (p.150). These comments resonate with the findings in this study. It is evident that participants delighted in the emotive, aesthetic, and communicatory features of the Nocturne art experience. With the employment of learning strategies and resources, these events and subsequent art viewing experiences will ideally continue to enable participants to meaningfully engage with their arts and culture community in the future.

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Appendix A: Pre-event Interview Guide

The intention of this interview is to get a little background information on you as a research participant. I'll begin with personal questions, but please feel free to not answer if you do not wish to.

Name: _____ Time: _____

Date: _____ Location: _____

Age bracket: 18 -30, 30 – 40, 40 - 50   Personal Camera: Yes or No

Next meeting time: _____   Folder: _____
File(s):_____

1) What is your educational background? Are you currently a student?

2) Can you tell me about your job? (what field or past working experience you have if you're not working now)

3) Where are you from originally?

4) How long have you lived in Halifax?

5) In which neighbourhood do you live? / How much time do you spend downtown?

6) How often do you visit art galleries?
        - Frequently (6 -12 times a year)
        -Occasionally, (1- 6 times a year)
        -Rarely (Once every 2 years)
        -Never (not at least within the last 10 years)

7) What types of art are you most interested in when visiting an art gallery? Or what types of galleries do you visit?

8) What other arts and culture events have you attended in the past? (For example plays, musical performances, concerts, dance performances, exhibitions)
        -Elaborate, where, what?

        (9) Are you planning to attend a gallery in the near future?)

10) Have you attended Nocturne, or a similar event in the past?
        -Elaborate, where, when,
        -what was your connection to the city?

10) Can you explain to me your understanding of what Nocturne/Nuit Blanche is?

11) Where did you hear about Nocturne?

12) Who do you think Nocturne is intended for?

13) Have you had a chance to see the program online? What in particular do you want to see this year?
OR:

The program has not yet been released, but do you know of anything happening that you would like to see, or that you know is happening; someone you know participating for example?

14) What are your expectations of the event?

15) How do you expect this experience to be different then looking at art in a gallery?

16) Why do you want to attend this event?

17) What experience do you have looking at contemporary art?

18) Taking into account, that there is no right or wrong answer, what does the term or idea of **contemporary art** mean to you?

19) Again, taking into account, that there is no right or wrong answer, what does the term or idea of **public art** mean to you?

20) Do you think that contemporary art is easily accessible to the general public?
    (Physically? Intellectually? Financially?)

21) Who do you plan to go with?

22) How late do you plan to stay out?

Any additional comments you'd like to make?

Appendix B: Post-event Interview Guide

Name: _____   Time: _____
Date:_____   Location_____
Folder: _____   File(s):_____

1) How was your overall experience of Nocturne?

2) How did it or didn't it meet your expectations?

3) What were some of the things you enjoyed **most** about Nocturne?

4) What were some of the things you enjoyed **least** about Nocturne?

5) Did you use public transit?

6) How did you find using the program guide and map? (how was the night planned?)

7) Can you tell me about your night and the images you took?

8) *When you get to your favourite/least, please tell me, I have specific questions before we discuss it in detail

    a. Favourite?

        i. Did you read the program description?

        ii. Did you have conversations about it with your friends or strangers?

        iii. Did you think about its relationship to its location?

        iv. Did the physical aspects of the place influence your experience of it?

        v. Why is this one your favourite?

        vi. Can you tell me about the situation surrounding your experience of it?

            1. What do you think is its relationship to its location?

        vii. How do you interpret this work?

    b. Least favourite?

        i. Did you read the program description?

    ii. Did you have conversations about it with your friends or strangers?

    iii. Did you think about its relationship to its location?

    iv. Did the physical aspects of the place influence your experience of it?

    v. Why is this one your least favourite?

    vi. Can you tell me about the situation surrounding your experience of it?

        1. What do you think is its relationship to its location?

    vii. How do you interpret this work?

9) Did you talk to any artists?

10) Did you talk to your friends or strangers about the meaning or significance of the art?

11) Did you visit any art galleries?

12) Did you visit any installations?

13) Did you attend any performances?

14) How would you say it differed from your experience visiting an art gallery or performance venue any other day?

15) In the pre-event interview, you mentioned that **contemporary art:**

(a summary of pre-event response was included here for each participant)

16) Did any of the artworks fall under your definition of contemporary art? Would you consider the artworks contemporary art?

17) Did engaging with these works change your understanding of **contemporary art?** How?

18) In the pre-event interview, you mentioned that **public art**

(a summary of pre-event response was inserted here for each participant)

19) Did any of the artworks fall under your definition of public art? Would you consider the artworks public art?

20) Did engaging with these works change your understanding of **public art?** How?

21) Did these artworks change your appreciation of contemporary art?

22) Do you think you learned anything from attending this event?

23) Do you think you learned anything from any of the artworks?

24) Did you make you think differently about the city of Halifax? How?

25) Did any particular artwork make you change how you think about or perceive a particular place in the city?

26) Do you plan to visit an art gallery/venue again anytime soon?

27) Do you plan to attend Nocturne again in the future?