

*Measuring Elements of Exhibition Design*

By

Maggie Lever

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## ABSTRACT

Measuring Elements of Exhibition Design

A curatorial thesis by Maggie Lever

OCAD University

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This thesis investigates the effects of curatorial and exhibition design strategies on the ability to engage an audience with the art presented. Using theories of aesthetics and affect, this paper will summarize the intentions, and evaluate the findings of this study based on the exhibit entitled *Atmospheres of Production*. Exhibiting the work of Juanita Lee Garcia, *Atmospheres of Production* displayed art using two contrasting environments. One area aimed to create a neutral exhibition space as to not detract from the art, the other intended to rethink display aesthetics and conventions while creating a more dynamic environment. The response of the audience was evaluated through focus groups and surveys in order to qualify and quantify the findings in an attempt to answer the question: To what extent does the environment of an exhibit affect the experience had by the audience?

**Keywords:** exhibition display, audience engagement, visitor experience, curatorial practices

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
<b>CURATORIAL ESSAY</b>	<b>1</b>
INTRODUCTION	2
ANALYSIS	4
ARTIST	13
ARTWORKS	16
SPACE	18
CURATORIAL METHODS	19
RESEARCH METHODS	23
CONCLUSION	24
<b>SUPPORT PAPER</b>	<b>26</b>
INTRODUCTION	27
LITERATURE REVIEW	27
EXHIBITION REVIEW	29
INSTALLATION CONCEPT AND DESIGN	34
DIDACTICS	38
LIGHTING	40
METHODOLOGY	40
RESEARCH RESULTS	43
SURVEY RESPONSE	44
FOCUS GROUP RESPONSE	45
CONCLUSION	51
BIBLIOGRAPHY	54
<b>APPENDICIES</b>	<b>57</b>
APPENDIX A: ARTIST BIO AND CV	57
APPENDIX B: MILK GLASS FLOORPLAN	60
APPENDIX C: VISUAL DOCUMENTATION OF EXHIBIT	62
APPENDIX D: COPIES OF MEDIA MATERIAL	68
APPENDIX E: LIST OF ARTWORKS	72
APPENDIX F: SURVEY	73
APPENDIX G: SURVEY RESULTS	74
APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT	78
APPENDIX I: DEMOGRAPHICS FORM	79
APPENDIX J: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM	80
APPENDIX K: FOCUS GROUP MEMBER DEMOGRAPHICS	82

## LIST OF FIGURES:

**Figure 1.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation view from Dundas Street West. Artwork by: Juanita Lee Garcia, All photos by: Maggie Lever. **pp vii**

**Figure 2.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of *Untitled (Tropical Sign 1)*; *Untitled (Tropical Sign 2)* and *Pole (Composition 1)*, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 14**

**Figure 3.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of *Blinds (Composition 1)*; *Untitled (Tropical Sign 4)* and *Blinds (Composition 2)*, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 16**

**Figure 4.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo, artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 19**

**Figure 5.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of the didactic information at the front of the exhibit, featuring *Untitled (Tropical Sign 1)* and *Untitled (Tropical Sign 2)*, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 25**

**Figure 6.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of the left half of the exhibit taken from Part A. Artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 36**

**Figure 7.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of the didactic information beside *Untitled (Tropical Sign 1)*, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 38**

**Figure 8.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo showing daytime lighting, artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 62**

**Figure 9.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo showing night lighting, artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 62**

**Figure 10.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of the left half of the exhibit taken from Part B. Artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 63**

**Figure 11.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of the right half of the exhibit taken from Part B. Artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 63**

**Figure 12.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of division between Part A and Part B of the exhibit featuring the temporary wall. Artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 64**

**Figure 13.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of the left half of Part A, artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 64**

**Figure 14.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of Part B of the exhibit, artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia. **pp 65**

**Figure 15.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of *Folded Table (Composition 2)* and *Folded Table (Composition 3)*, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 65**

**Figure 16.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of *Gatherings (Composition 4)* and *Gatherings (Composition 5)* in Part A, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 66**

**Figure 17.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of *Gatherings (Composition 6)* and *Gatherings (Composition 7)* in Part B, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 66**

**Figure 18.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of *Folded Table (Composition 2)*; *Folded Table (Composition 3)* and *Untitled (Tropical Sign 3)*, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016. **pp 67**

**Figure 19.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of *Untitled (Tropical Sign 4)* and *Blinds (Composition 2)*, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2017. **pp 67**



**Figure 1.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation view from Dundas Street West.  
Artwork by: Juanita Lee Garcia, All photos by: Maggie Lever

**CURATORIAL ESSAY**

*Atmospheres of Production*



## INTRODUCTION

It has been established repeatedly that the placement of art can affect the perception of the audience. Architectural historian, Victoria Newhouse, highlights that placement of artworks can alter many features from the value of the work, to the connotations it conveys (Newhouse, 2005). Newhouse outlines changes in display practices historically, noting the public museum's distinct audience, particular language describing art, and "walk-by" consumption of art. She discusses the historical changes in setting from private collections to public museums, and the gradual shift in galleries towards what has been known as the white cube galleries – characterized by neutral spaces, treating "art as a self-sufficient entity...removed from everyday life" (Newhouse, 2005, p.22). Further complicated by the introduction of exhibition designers in the 1960s and recent inclinations towards dramatic architecture, gallery management is left deciding between prioritizing the art, the architecture, the experience, their profits, donors, etc. This metamorphosis of the exhibition space reflects changes in response to culture, society, public demands, and aesthetic modifications as the discourse shifts.

It is important to note that there are multiple kinds of exhibition spaces to which questions of placement and display can be applied. Currently there exists a gallery system primarily divided by their mission and mandate or their financial and management structure. This could include both for profit exhibition spaces such as commercial galleries, or not for profit artist run centers, as well as private galleries and large public arts institutions or museums. This paper will refer to exhibition spaces in terms of the display practices irrespective of the type and function of gallery. As a relatively new discourse, the published materials to which this thesis refers mainly analyze large public art institutions or museums in which studies are performed

and there exists a larger history of art display; however, these theories are being applied to exhibition spaces in general while evaluating the factors affecting audience engagement.

Through this evolution of the exhibition space, the concept of the ‘spectacle’ display centre has arisen and includes such galleries as the Bilbao Guggenheim where dramatic architecture is used to entice the audience (Shiner, 2011). The term ‘spectacle’ originating from critical theorist Guy Debord’s book entitled *The Society of the Spectacle* which refers to the superficial manifestation of mass media and references Karl Marx’s theories of fetishism of commodities (1977) is applicable when considering the gallery audience as consumers. The art museum as a spectacle creates a potential disconnect between the gallery within and the actual structure, both in terms of the use of the space and the overall experience within it. Peter Friess an experienced curator, suggests that “architects these days often tend to build museums as historical monuments, leaving the objects to fend for themselves in a battle with the edifice” (Friess, 2006). In this case the design and curatorial use of the space can create a barrier for audience engagement at the detriment of their experience.

In terms of measuring this experience, consideration is often paid to how long patrons spent in the exhibition space, if they would return, as opposed to evaluating their relationship with the art and their experience with the displays. For this reason, measuring, through both qualitative and quantitative research methods, a more meaningful interaction between the visitor and artworks could help shift the narrative of audience engagement to a more holistic approach. Placed within this discourse, *Measuring Elements of Exhibition Design* examines the question: To what extent does the altered environment of an exhibit affect the audience experience? Using theories of visitor experience, audience engagement, common curatorial practices and exhibition design this thesis will describe the research done to assess which strategies and atmospheric

changes influence the interaction the visitor has with exhibited art. This paper will summarize the intentions, and evaluate the findings of this study based on the exhibit entitled *Atmospheres of Production*. Displaying the work of Juanita Lee Garcia, *Atmospheres of Production* exhibited art using two contrasting atmospheres. Presented simultaneously in the same exhibition space, Part A of the exhibit created a neutral gallery area, as to not detract from the art, while Part B represented a rethinking of gallery aesthetics and conventions while creating a more dynamic environment and presentation of art. Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected from attendees in order to assess the opinions and perspectives of the audience in these two environments.

## ANALYSIS

While this exhibition grappled with the ability to alter visitor experience, it is important to highlight the definition of the term ‘experience’. Most succinctly, philosopher John Dewey outlines the term by saying: “experience is the result, the sign, and the reward of that interaction of organism and environment which, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication” (Dewey, 1934, p. 22). The concept that atmosphere plays a role in shaping the interaction with art resulting in a more meaningful experience is the central premise of this thesis (transition from interaction to curating in general). Similarly, curator and professor Mary Jane Jacob explains “as curators, we make exhibitions as space for experience” (2006, p. 137). In her analysis, Jacob refers to space as a mental, or theoretical place as opposed to a physical environment. She claims it is essential that the exhibition space allows for a deeper viewer engagement, creating a thoughtful and almost spiritual experience for the audience (Jacob, 2006, p. 137). Alternatively, Dr. Phillipp Schorch, affiliated with the Alfred Deakin Institute of Citizenship and Globalization, uses a case study

from New Zealand to determine: “we simultaneously ‘feel’ and ‘think’ the spatial characteristics of our experiences” (Schorch, 2013). This statement accounts for the impact of the physical space that Jacob may not. Using Dewey’s definition, I believe the created environment is crucial in fostering the interaction visitors have with art in order to construct the important outcomes of viewer engagement discussed by Jacob – and as such, my intended role as curator.

Brian O’Doherty, an Irish art critic and academic, says “The ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is “art.” The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself” (O’Doherty, 1999, p. 14). On one hand, this eliminates distractions for observing and appreciating art, however, it may result in idolization or worship of the art and the subsequent creation of a metaphysical barrier. The art then becomes unattainable and unrelateable. A connection could be made to the ways in which art historian Carol Duncan talks about the art museum as a ‘ritual,’ in the way we perform in these spaces, removing ourselves from the worries of our daily lives, and attain a certain experience (Duncan, 1995, p. 20). She argues that: “western concepts of the aesthetic experience, generally taken as the art museum’s *raison d’être*, match up rather closely to the kind of rationales often given for traditional rituals (enlightenment, revelation, spiritual equilibrium or rejuvenation)” (Duncan, 1995, p. 20).

Another element of this concept includes the behaviors that typically follow ritualistic practices. For example, it is speculated that the type of solemn worship seen in churches would be equal to those seen in a museum. Parallels can be made to cultural historian Tony Bennett who writes that museums or institutions were meant to house ‘high culture’ and “help form and shape the moral, mental and behavioral characteristics of the population” (Bennett, 1995, p. 21). One way this is ensured is through what Bennett calls “the exhibitionary complex” where he

compares Foucault's description of the carceral system to the museum as an institution, also designed to change behavior through self-surveillance (Bennett, 1995, p. 59). To this end, if the museum was created as "an exemplary space in which the rough and raucous might learn to civilize themselves by modeling their conduct on the middle-class codes of behavior to which museum attendance would expose them" (Bennett, 1995, p. 28), what affects are these institutions having on the population's relationship with art? To this end, in a conversation with Victoria Newhouse, the artist Dorothea Rockburne, said "although paintings might have to fight for their life, they look better in a home than in a museum because they're alive, you feel them; they haven't been intellectualized and categorized historically" (Newhouse, 2005, p.13). The latter part of this quote refers to some of the other negative affects the museum as an institution can have on the viewing experience as well as the interpretation of art in a more conceptual nature.

Alternatively, curator Sarah Hegenbart discusses the participatory art museum as a space that is dedicated to and supportive of participatory art (Hegenbart, 2016). The author describes the concept of participatory art practice as one that "requires active participant-spectators rather than viewers who passively admire artworks hanging on museum walls" (Hegenbart, 2016). She goes on to explain that "participatory art does not have a value prior to the engagement of the participant-spectators who actively shape and construct its value."<sup>1</sup> In her analysis, she explains participatory artwork is both: "a genuinely aesthetic aspect in which reality is suspended" and "a genuinely ethical aspect in which it has an impact on the participant's life that surpasses the purely aesthetic realm" (Hegenbart, 2016). When discussing the use of participatory art in the gallery she outlines:

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<sup>1</sup> Hegenbart, S. (2016). The Participatory Art Museum: Approached from a Philosophical Perspective. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Institute*, footnote p. 320

while the modernist white cube gallery space provides a suspended realm that separates us from our day-to-day concerns and thereby offers a space in which we can fully dedicate ourselves to aesthetic appreciation, participatory art no longer allows this. Rather, encounters with participatory art tend to be integrated within the realm of the everyday reality of the audience (Hegenbart, 2016).

Although this notion of participatory art surpassing the purely visual experience and affecting the viewer in a more permanent meaningful way has merit, does it diminish art that does not have this outcome? In terms of curating artworks of all kinds, how does one use these strategies of deeper engagement of the viewer in the same neutral exhibition space that suspends time and apply them to art that may be more purely aesthetic? Or is this even possible? Must art have the intention of creating an experience in order to engage viewers?

John Dewey, as previously mentioned, further complicates the notion of experience and experiencing art as the product of the artist in a way that creates a theoretical framework for this thesis. Dewey describes many qualities of *an* experience, as having an end and conclusion, having an input and output, having unity and flow, as being parts of a whole, and all with the necessity of being based in active consciousness as opposed to going through the motions of experience in a fugue state (Dewey, 1934). Which is to say, this type of experience is had by the artist during the production process, as well as the viewer in the interpreting process. He evaluates many characteristics of an experience, as it relates to aesthetic experience and the interaction and understanding of art as an artist and a perceiver of art. He outlines the contemplative character of aesthetic and the importance of understanding art and its means of production not simply the aesthetic qualities.

Aesthetics has been mentioned in terms of art that has more of an aesthetic value, noting the physical beauty, perhaps as opposed to an emotional or conceptual connection to the audience – though the two are not mutually exclusive. Philosophers such as Dewey or more

notably Jacques Rancière theorize about the implications of aesthetics, yet for the purposes of this discussion aesthetics will be simplified. As Helen Charman, Director of Learning and Research at Design Museum, London outlines “Aesthetics in this context is less about taste and more about an emotional engagement with the works on display and the display environment itself... Such “affective forces” are generated through the physical, spatial, sensory environment of the exhibition” (Charman, 2016). Charman quotes Ben Highmore in saying aesthetics is “primarily concerned with material experiences, with the way the sensual world greets the sensorial body and with the affective forces that are generated in such meetings” (Charman, 2016).

Additionally, Dewey takes into account works of art transitioning from crafts used as functional items, to displayed items, to products with monetary value, but mainly in the sense of the environment in which the art was viewed and how this changed the interpretation or experience of the art. He explains “objects that were in the past valid and significant because of their place in the life of a community now function in isolation from the conditions of their origin” (Dewey, 1934, p. 8). Dewey is concerned with the production process of the artist and its role in creating experience for the artist as well as the perceiver. Similarly, literary and cultural historian Stephen Greenblatt theorizes about the role of the museum in presenting art that has a lasting effect on viewers, both in regards to the transfer of knowledge pertaining to culture and experience. Greenblatt hypothesizes the role of ‘resonance’ and ‘wonder’ as models of exhibition display (Greenblatt, 1991). He rationalizes:

By *resonance* I mean the power of the displayed object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which it may be taken by a viewer to stand. By *wonder* I mean the power of the displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention (Greenblatt, 1991).

Within this discussion, to the argument of many others to which this thesis refers, Greenblatt alludes to the command and influence art in a museum setting can have and its greater significance. Whether this be cultural significance, or experiential significance, the ‘power of the displayed object’ is often undeniable, yet the environment in which it is seen can affect one’s ability to let the object hold the power over them.

Museums function, partly *by* design and partly in spite of themselves, as monuments to the fragility of cultures, to the fall of sustaining institutions and noble houses, the collapse of rituals, the evacuation of myths, the destructive effects of warfare, neglect, and corrosive doubt (Greenblatt, 1991).

Greenblatt furthers this discussion while analyzing artifacts distorted by museums, removed from their places of cultural significance, and housed in museums where objects are placed in relation to other objects with vastly different connotations. He argues that through this juxtaposition “we can begin to understand something of the dialectical nature of these relations” (Greenblatt, 1991) while forming a deeper understanding of our own culture. Placing items in conversation with one another is a curatorial tool that could perhaps bring out new meaning to pieces, or more negatively infringe on the cultural significance of an artifact – in any case it speaks to the power of the curatorial practice and art of display.

As previously mentioned, Victoria Newhouse elaborates the history of display practices and their implications when noting the characteristics of the art audience “determined subject matter and placement” of art (Newhouse, 2005). She lists many curatorial decisions that seem insignificant yet largely impact the reception of a piece: “the choice of a room, the positioning within the room, the juxtaposition of other objects, lighting, wall color, and wall texture” (Newhouse, 2005). Pertaining to Newhouse’s argument, a case study that inspired this is that of artist Fred Wilson who relied on his background working in museums, noticing the affects the



environment and space had on the opinions patrons had on art and the artists when conducting the show entitled *Rooms with a View: The Struggle Between Cultural Content and the Context of Art* (Karp & Wilson, 1996). This was one of his first exhibits in the Bronx which consisted of 3 separate rooms – one was a traditional modern gallery space “a white cube”, one resembled an “ethnographic museum”, and the third was “a turn-of-the century salon space” (Karp & Wilson, 1996, p. 252). The work of 30 artists was displayed across these spaces, all of the artists had work in the modern gallery space, and the remainder of the work was spread throughout the two other spaces. Wilson called this an experiment, and noted that the works were viewed differently depending on the space. Some of the works were actually not recognized as having been previously viewed by visiting curators. The space in which the work was displayed altered the work, for example work in the ethnographic museum was assumed to be historical, when it wasn't. To Wilson, the white cube, traditional modern gallery space “looked cold, it looked scientific” (Karp & Wilson, 1996, p. 252). This experiment evaluating the impact of the type of museum display on the reception of the art is a fitting precedent for *Atmospheres of Production* – although Wilson's opinion is primarily anecdotal.

Another illustration of the site or environment of an artwork drastically changing the viewer's interaction and therefore engagement with the piece is that of *Him*, by artist Maurizio Cattelan. The artwork has been shown in large art institutions at the other side of a white empty room, or a long hallway, where viewers walk into the room and in the distance, see the back of what appears to be a highly realistic sculpture of a little boy kneeling in prayer. There are videos documenting the progression of the typical viewer as they approach the artwork, walking around the 3-dimensional piece, and when finally confronted with the front of the sculpture experience a range of emotions including shock, horror, anger, fright and many more. The front of the

sculpture depicts Adolf Hitler on his knees, a surprise that was in no way alluded to by the back of the piece or the title as the viewer walked in. This physical act of having to approach and walk around the sculpture in order to engage with the true meaning and intention, and the immediate reaction that ensues for most viewers is noteworthy. Alternatively, the piece was also shown in 2012 in a long dark corridor in the Warsaw Ghetto. This placement caused uproar as some felt it was insensitive to those who were killed in the Holocaust (The Telegraph, 2012), however, this placement had a very different experience than any other location. It could only be viewed from a distance, and the audience did not have the same physical action of approaching the piece, yet it was widely known to the audience that it was representative of Hitler, despite only being faced with the back of the shape. Because of the weight of the work in situ and the greater historical context, the reaction involved much more controversy and reflection, almost with greater implications than when it was placed in the isolation of a museum. Therefore, in this case, not only was the physical interaction with the art changed by the site of display, but the response of the audience. Relying again on a different kind of interaction, *Him* was also displayed at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2012 alongside Cattelan's entire body of work up to that date. Although the show featured all of the works suspended from the ceiling in the large circular rotunda (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2012) which activated the space in an engaging way, *Him* was almost lost in the mix. The initial reaction had by visitors in other settings when viewing this piece was lost again reinforcing the view that display impacts the experience.

In the book chapter, *Exhibition as Film*, cultural theorist Mieke Bal discusses the impact of juxtaposition of two parts of one exhibit, and how this can be incredibly impactful – similar to the way Greenblatt describes combining different cultural objects. In the exhibit, *Partners*, one

portion of the exhibit called *The Teddy Bear Project* by artist and curator Ydessa Hendeles is adjacent to the room with *Him*, by Cattelan, described previously. The former shows thousands of photographs with the same frame and matting, and all containing a teddy bear. The solitary sculpture of a kneeling Hitler evokes a drastically different emotional and physical response akin to shock and disgust, whereas the photos of the teddy bears is more introspective and exploratory. Mieke Bal describes this contrast as “one between multitude and singularity, between overwhelming and meditative, between welcoming warmth and cold loneliness” (Bal, 2007, p. 80). She goes on to describe how the “homey” warmth of the room with the teddy bears, lit by domestic lamps is in sharp contrast to the bare, “near empty” space containing the sculpture of the kneeling Hitler. This juxtaposition of two opposing spaces with contrasting content demonstrates the power of display, as well as the significance of the display space. Within this example, Mieke Bal discusses more historically traditional methods of display, analogous to the cabinet of curiosity to engage viewers.

In a more contemporary and commercial faculty, a concept that has recently emerged is that of atmospherics which typically relates to retail stores and includes all the interior design and decorating features that contribute to a more enjoyable and successful shopping experience (Forrest, 2013). As well, the atmospherics contributes to the branding of the retail store which is meant to enhance buyer loyalty (MBASchool, nd). This concept has recently been studied in terms of the exhibition display practices. The white-cube exhibition space has traditionally modelled expansive white neutral spaces seen as ideal because of the lack of interference with display. However, the concept of experience can be considered in terms of the entire space, as well as the display. In other words, a holistic approach could be taken to study the “whole package” of the visitor experience (Forrest, 2013).

A significant recent decline in shoppers in American stores has been attributed to the concept that younger generations want to spend money on experiences and not physical goods (Saiidi, 2016). Some museums have taken this seriously and developed displays that have an over-the-top quality to them, making the visit almost surreal by using 3-D imaging, light shows, and sound effects. But shows with this type of extravagant environment would be costly and not necessarily easy to maintain. However, these techniques show the ability to use atmospherics and design elements to alter a space for a varied outcome. The concept of atmospherics, taken from a commercialized discourse could be applied to curatorial practices, where the enjoyable experience for the viewers is almost a consequence of behavioral science strategies, however the end result does not have to be a spectacle display. The power of displayed art to captivate and emotionally move an audience, or as described by Greenblatt as the elements of resonance and wonder holds intrinsic value. Can commercial strategies be used to engage audiences with the integrity of the viewing experience intact? On a very small scale this thesis reviews the ability to affect this engagement while still remaining considerate of the work of the artist.

## ARTIST

Commanding the sense of wonder to which Greenblatt refers, Juanita Lee Garcia is a printmaker, born in Bogotá Colombia, whose labour-intensive studio process fetishizes labour and experimentation with materials. Her interests lay in what a material can physically be manipulated to do, and conceptually what each material can represent and convey. This stems from the physically intensive and material centered practice of printmaking that the artist manoeuvres to create her own unique style. Lee Garcia uses her methods of production and her experience creating the work to embody the image making process and her identity through the final images. Her process begins with extensive research on the material she has chosen.



**Figure 2.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of *Untitled (Tropical Sign 1)*; *Untitled (Tropical Sign 2)* and *Pole (Composition 1)*, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016

I research the material's origin and its production. How it spread as a material, how it became mass produced, how it became used in the spaces its used in. Research is an integral part of my work, understanding it inside and out so I can feel like I am authentically working with it and not just working through it, and how it fits into the greater context of what I am interested in (Lee Garcia, Artist Interview, 2017).

During the creation process, her laborious practice is both experimental and conceptual. It is inspired by the Tropicalia movement from Brazil in the 1960s where kitschy, somewhat nationalistic symbols were used as art and fed back to the consumer. This then intersects with the Russian scholar Viktor Shklovsky and his writings on “re-situating actions that have become habitual” in the context of de-familiarization (Lee Garcia, 2016). These themes are united through Lee Garcia's colorful, textural, atypical prints.

I started looking at how we consume culture through materials, symbols and signs and how we become associated with it and adopt it. For example, even though I am Latino, I

don't have to adopt this sense of tropical-ness but because I consume it and I become associated with it, it becomes part of my identity ... So, then I started to make imagery from the material, taking vinyl and shredding it apart and making images and compositions based on the process of creating in the studio and the process of making art. Influenced by what we think of art and craft, and the conceptual nature of image making and reproduction and emphasizing what tropicality is and what it can mean to be Latino. Applying these concepts to design and creating posters of this new identity, that are really just cut outs of a collage which ties in the ideas of production, reproduction and the consumer (Lee Garcia, 2017).

Lee Garcia's work challenges image making and traditional printmaking as a means of production. Her pieces are aesthetically captivating with the use of texture, layering, patterns and a variety of materials that engage the viewer. As her work reflects on the production process, she aims to leave space for the audience to interpret the image and ultimately complete the image. This is done by alluding to the conceptual nature through the often-deemed Latin inspired colours and patterns while the works take the form of décor, yet these messages are not directly stated and thus open for visual interpretation.

John Dewey outlines this same notion by explaining the role of the perceiver. He notes "the artist embodies in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works" and the perception of the art as part of the artistic making and viewing experience (Dewey, 1934, p. 50). Similarly, Lee Garcia envisions the role of the consumer after her role as producer and reproducer, while the consumer finishes the process of interpreting the images and their tropical influences as either familiar or unfamiliar.

Equally, Mary Jane Jacob describes the importance of this metaphysical space for the viewer to receive and interpret the work - "maintaining this empty space so that others can eventually come in, too" (Jacob, 2006, p. 140). She quotes artist Marina Abramovic discussing her work entitled *The House with the Ocean View* (2002) when saying "the public and I actually

made the piece. Without the public, the piece doesn't exist, so they filled it” (Jacob, 2006, p. 139). This is reminiscent of the way Marcel Duchamp describes the creative act as he explains “the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualification and thus adds his contribution to the creative act” (Duchamp, 1975). Therefore, as Jacob explains, it is not enough to simply produce the art, or display it in a museum, but to engage the audience to, as Duchamp puts it, complete the creative act. Leaving this conceptual space for the viewer to participate in consuming the artwork, could be described as a method for engaging the viewer.

## ARTWORKS



**Figure 3.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of *Blinds (Composition 1)*; *Untitled (Tropical Sign 4)* and *Blinds (Composition 2)*, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016

*Atmospheres of Production* exhibited twenty-two artworks created by Lee Garcia who used a single pattern from a tropical vinyl printed tablecloth to create an entire series. She cut the vinyl into interesting shapes and sewed the pieces together to create a new pattern -- she then scanned and printed the new image. From there she continued to repeat the process of cutting and collaging and shaping a new image until she was satisfied with the outcome. This final image was then used to create five distinct interpretations of the new image - the first being natural wood sculptural structures with printed vinyl strips dispersing from perforations in the wood. Another would be line drawings using these same spliced vinyl strips carefully glued using a paintbrush and rice glue onto Sommerset paper. Alternatively, Lee Garcia printed large sheets of the image in black and white on vinyl which she installed using T-pins in a 3-dimensional installation on the wall. In another iteration, smaller segments of the larger image were carefully chosen and collaged into unique shapes which were then printed on Epson photo paper, sprayed with a matte finish, and using rice paper glue, a chine-collé technique was performed to adhere the print to Sommerset paper; this execution of the print was then framed traditionally in clean white frames and hung. Lastly, even smaller segments of the vinyl print were then highlighted by enlarging them onto 60" high outdoor mesh posters with colourful backgrounds.

This range from large images with bold solid colours to small intricate line drawings offers many different formats, sizes, materials, textures and colours to engage with. Including three dimensional, sculptural works, Lee Garcia's pieces are dynamic and eye-catching. Due to the varying nature of the artworks, the methods of display for each piece also changes – keeping the viewer actively looking and captivated as they walk through the exhibit, while still observing a cohesive body of work. The unity through the body of work and the diversity in the form of the pieces lend themselves to the premise of this thesis and the engagement of the audience.



## SPACE

The Milk Glass Gallery was the site for the exhibit *Atmospheres of Production*. This space highlighted the artworks with abundant natural light and a pre-existing bar area for events which lent itself to a non-traditional or unexpected gallery environment. Configured in a long narrow room, Milk Glass provided ample space to divide the area in two parts, while still being an integrated setting. A wall was constructed prior to the exhibit to partially divide the viewing space, but still allow movement between the two spaces. The constructed wall was 6' x 6' x 4". A venue of a different spatial design might not lend itself to the division as easily. Milk Glass provided an opportunity to house two parts of a whole exhibit in one unified space as opposed to dividing the show into two different venues. This might have impacted the impression the space had on viewers and allowed for even more uncontrollable variables in the study. Seeing the exhibit at two different times, or in two entirely separate parts might have infringed on the audience's ability to compare and contrast the two halves simultaneously. The back half of the space with the pre-existing bar, and unique lighting and décor presented a suitable opportunity to exhibit the art in a space in which the art had to contend with external elements. Milk Glass Gallery further supported the premise of the research which was to create both a typical contemporary exhibition space with a neutral viewing environment (Part A) alongside an atypical viewing experience where the art is either complemented by or fighting with opposing design elements (Part B). Offering both a space typically used for galleries, with traditional adjustable track lighting and tall white walls and a visually dense bar area, Milk Glass was an appropriate choice for the execution of this thesis research.

## CURATORIAL METHODS

Presenting two differentiated halves to *Atmospheres of Production* the space remained the constant, however specific curatorial strategies changed to further define the differences in viewing experiences between Part A and Part B of the exhibit. Apart from the use and design of the space, another curatorial and exhibition design tool being evaluated and used in practice was lighting. Milk Glass Gallery has a large window with natural light illuminating the artworks in the main area of the exhibition space, however the long and narrow shape of the space leaves the back half reliant on incandescent lighting. Similarly, in the evening, the front half of the gallery is also lit using typical track lighting to create a white-washed effect over the wall.



**Figure 4.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo, artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016

In the book, *Creating Exhibitions: Collaboration in the Planning, Development and Design of Innovative Experiences*, the authors state “lighting can be poetry that brings the entire exhibition together and sets the experience” (McKenna-Cress, McKenna-Cress, & Kamien, 2013, p. 153). Lighting is of vital importance in the art of display. It can set the mood, change the ambience of a space and can be used to focus on one piece or white-wash a wall to show numerous pieces (McKenna-Cress, McKenna-Cress, & Kamien, 2013, p. 154). Victoria Newhouse discusses lighting in the clear majority of her descriptions of the various galleries that she discusses in her book, *Towards a New Museum* (Newhouse, 2006). She emphasizes the use of natural light and how it is brought into various spaces, and allowed to change over the day, and with various weather conditions. Not all lighting, especially natural lighting is complimentary. Newhouse describes the Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona which has a variety of structural details that introduce natural light. The result is apparently wonderful to experience the architectural aspects of the building, but it makes the art viewing problematic.

In general, lighting is meant to show the artwork in the best possible way, and also at a level that is appropriate for the viewer. Kevan Shaw, in *Lighting the Show*, describes that “subtle variations in light level, colour, direction, and intensity provide visual cues that can almost subliminally inform the exhibition visitor about time, place and other key pieces of contextual information, especially with regard to larger object displays” (Shaw, 2001, pp. 437-8).

According to Philip Hughes, author of *Exhibition Design*, “the visual perception of exhibits, spatial relationships, surfaces and graphic treatments is governed by how they are lit” (Hughes, 2015, p. 132). Lighting impacts visitor perception of the exhibit. There are a number of factors that Hughes feels should always be considered in terms of lighting an exhibit. First of all, the transition from a light to a dark space, or the reverse may be awkward, or difficult for the

viewer. Daylight is important and its presence or absence must be taken into consideration as well as the consistency of the lighting throughout the day and evening (Hughes, 2015, p. 141). Often, it is important to determine the key piece in an exhibit and then maximize the dramatic lighting associated with that piece (Hughes, 2015, p. 138). As well, lighting in walkways may need to be brighter for the visitors to navigate safely. According to Hughes, the lighting “supports the exhibition structure and helps to convey the show’s concept” (Hughes, 2015, p. 154).

Other parameters that should be considered include the potential detrimental effects of the light on the artwork. The ultraviolet light during the day will cause fading of works that are not protected by specific types of glass. Light that contains infrared radiation generates heat, which can be harmful to delicate items. There are environmental issues with many of the light bulbs used in the past. Incandescent bulbs usually cause a yellowing glow, and some LED lighting may cause the work to be bluish (Berns, 2011). Lighting schemes for large exhibitions tend to involve 3 types of lighting, ambient light which is the typical traditional lighting that surrounds a space, accent lighting that highlights a specific item or group of items, and then “sparkle” which would include all those types of lighting that is designed to create a special effect (Locker, 2011, p. 155).

Another strategy to promote engagement that was present in *Atmospheres of Production* was the use of didactic material. Dewey explains the importance of understanding art as opposed to simply appreciating the aesthetic, while also highlighting the characteristics of an experience that allude to an organized narrative (Dewey, 1934, p. 11 & 57) . Historically labels were added to museum displays in an attempt to educate the working classes about the subject of the exhibit. This process of providing educational material for the less educated groups was described by

some as an insult to the intelligent and educated museum visitors. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the use of guides was introduced to provide the museum visitors with a more extensive education, as it was felt that the “human voice” was far superior to the informational labels and books (Bennett, 2001). More recently, an article titled *Your Labels Make Me Feel Stupid* discusses how museums and galleries are moving away from the concept that the labelling of artwork has historically been authoritative and somewhat hegemonic (Gregg, 2010). Instead, labels that offer a discussion of the framework of an exhibit may lead to improved audience engagement. By providing more context, as well as the artist’s perspective - contemporary labels try to allow the viewer to develop a deeper understanding of the work. In addition, the language tends to be more suggestive and less directed in an attempt to help the viewer arrive at his/her own opinion of the work and the exhibit.

It appears that one of the wishes of the viewer is to feel some connection with the artist. This has proved useful at the Denver Art Museum where there is a touch screen version of a specific painting, and as visitors touch certain areas on the screen, they hear the artist’s voice describing their work (Gregg, 2010). The use of anecdotes has been introduced to provide the didactic information and to encourage audience engagement especially in the museums that choose to highlight the art-making process. At the Whitney Museum, there has been a recent attempt to balance the narrative of the artist with the desire to make the work “accessible to the public” (Gregg, 2010). For example, the artist may prefer a blank space in which to hang his/her works and allow visitors to simply view them. However, viewers generally prefer more information, including labels, exhibition text, and interviews with the artist. Some art galleries still prefer the simple austere presentation with minimal if no labels. Other galleries have come to rely on experts in audience engagement to help with design plans of the exhibition (Gregg,

2010). Authors Kristin Johnson and Hugh A.D. Spencer offer many tools for effective didactics (Johnson, 2001) (Spencer, 2001). These include avoiding jargon, familiar and legible typeface, sufficient lighting for reading and short, relevant information.

For this reason, and those outlined by Gregg, didactic information that highlights the intentions of the artist in Lee Garcia's words was used in *Atmospheres of Production* to engage viewers further in the artistic process and introduced her intentions behind the pieces - rather than the authoritarian voice of the curator or gallery that have become common practice in dictating the meaning behind the artworks.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Sharon Macdonald (2007) clarifies the difficulty in measuring viewer experience as many factors such as social indicators or even willingness of the viewer to engage with the work that cannot be truly quantified. Details such as the length of time patrons spend reading didactic material as well as information about the audience must be taken into account in a study of this kind – while also admitting that non-scientific measurements involving people leave room for speculation and uncontrollable variables. For example, Macdonald mentions the work of Gaynor Bagnall, whose work explores “differences among visitors in the extent to which they want to keep an emotional distance from the topic displayed or affectively engage and ‘experience’ it” (MacDonald, 2007). This thesis proposes to examine precisely this; however, using various curatorial techniques to determine if this level of engagement and the resulting experience can be altered, despite the tendency of the audience. Many factors can affect these results, such as how many people are in the room or how the space lends itself to this form of experience; therefore, the ability to test these factors, by controlling as many variables as possible, would be valuable information in the curatorial field. Using focus groups and surveys, *Atmospheres of Production*

was evaluated to determine which factors affected the viewing experience in terms of the work of Juanita Lee Garcia at the Milk Glass Gallery. Controlling curatorial elements such as didactic material, lighting, wall size, and impeding design elements, this exhibit space, focus groups, and questionnaires provided data which was interpreted and analyzed.

## CONCLUSION

Although as outlined, pre-existing literature determines that exhibition display has an impactful affect on viewing art, there are no predictions in terms of how these specific curatorial strategies and changes made to the particular display will affect the preference of the visitor and their subsequent engagement. The referenced literature shows discrepancies in opinions in terms of the factors such as impacts of environment, preference in regards to didactic material, both an appreciation of the museum space and negative accounts of the authoritarian, and the carceral-like culture infringing nature of the museum as an institution. Which is to say, any difference of opinion, and any consensus reached is valid and valuable information to the curatorial field in the new era of researching visitor experience. The analysis of *Atmospheres of Production* attempts to quantify and qualify these discrepancies and opinions in order to collect data that can be interpreted and implemented when actively engaging audiences in the future. The results of this study are both interesting and enlightening.



**Figure 5.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of the didactic information at the front of the exhibit, featuring *Untitled (Tropical Sign 1)* and *Untitled (Tropical Sign 2)*, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016



**SUPPORT PAPER**

## INTRODUCTION

The exhibit, *Atmospheres of Production*, provided an opportunity to investigate the effects of curatorial and exhibition design strategies on the ability to engage an audience. Displaying the work of Juanita Lee Garcia, *Atmospheres of Production* presented two distinct viewing areas in a single exhibition space in order to determine if the visitor experience in these differentiated spaces varied. Experience in this instance refers to the interaction of the visitor and the exhibition space in order to convey the intention behind Lee Garcia's pieces. This notion of the exhibition space is important as the curated atmosphere informs the ability for art to communicate. Another element of experience is that of the production of the artwork, which is as integral to the work of Lee Garcia as the viewing and interpretation process. Her laborious image making method produces art that leaves space for the viewer to construct meaning and decipher what they see; resulting in the completion of the art-making experience. Exhibited at the Milk Glass Gallery, *Atmospheres of Production* was used to present a template for the collection of data in the form of surveys and focus groups to act as a case study for potential research involving visitor experiences.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Visitor Studies

In *The Exhibitionary Complex*, Tony Bennett describes the purpose of the museum exhibit to be “that of providing new instruments for the moral and cultural regulation of the working class” (Bennett, 1996, p. 95) – with a focus on the concept of “show and tell” (Bennett, 1996, p. 97). In the book, *Interpretive Planning for Museums: Integrating Visitor Perspectives in Decision Making*, the authors discuss how historically decisions for museum displays were somewhat subjectively determined by factors such as the content of the museum's private

collection, or based on the whim of the director or foundation member of the museum. Systems of evaluation were not in place, and the visitor experience was often not directly considered. With time, measuring outcomes and ensuring museums were more accountable became far more important, and the visitor experience was emphasized as a component of planning (Wells, Butler, & Koke, 2013, p. 15). Because of this move toward accountability, visitor studies became far more numerous in the 1980s and thereafter. John Falk and Lynn Dierking in *The Museum Experience Revisited* and previous works have written extensively on the museum visit experience and describe visitor characteristics that deal with motivation and perspectives, and how these relate to the visitor's education or knowledge acquisition (Falk & Dierking, 2013). In 2012, Kirchberg and Tröndle reviewed the literature relating to visitor studies and provided a thorough overview of existing studies, and suggest that the available data is mainly limited to material obtained before and after museum visits. These authors recommend that observational data gathered during the museum visit might be more useful (Kirchberg & Tröndle, 2012). In 2016, Packer and Ballantyne further reviewed visitor studies literature and provided 10 components of the visitor experience that could be used to quantify and qualify the museum visit experience and lead to improvement in design and content of future exhibitions (Packer & Ballantyne, 2016).

### Exhibition Display

Museums were historically built to house art and antiquities in a somewhat hierarchical and haughty manner. Following the French Revolution, the Louvre became a public gallery and became a showcase of all the riches of France and “the French enjoyed this storehouse of treasures, which showed their greatness” (Carrier, 2006, p. 22). Consequently, exhibition display at that time focused on grandeur and ceremony. Carol Duncan supports this concept as she

describes historical changes in display in her chapter, “From the Princely Gallery to the Public Art Museum” (Duncan, 1995, pp. 21-46). This sense of “cultural imperialism” persisted in museums well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bal, 1996) and probably still exists today. At the same time education became a dominant theme in museums, and exhibition display reflected this need. Victoria Newhouse’s book, *Art and the Power of Placement*, repeatedly demonstrates the importance and consequence of display. She emphasizes how placement impacts perception, and how display determines the experience (Newhouse, 2005). The importance of the visitor experience coincided with a move toward exhibition display that evoked an aesthetic encounter with the art. As well, in the museums with historical and scientific content the need to depict cultures with more accuracy and sensitivity started to develop (Macdonald, 1999, pp. 13-14). The concept of atmospherics, frequently used in the retail sector, emerged as a method of exhibition display that used ambience to influence behavior of gallery visitors leading to a more satisfying experience (Forrest, 2013). In addition, the concept of the spectacle or “blockbuster” exhibit in which the display is meant to entertain, thrill and captivate the audience has evolved over the past decade (Counts, 2009). In the article, *Spectacle and Display: Setting the Terms*, the authors explain that museums “have become not so much the place to view art as the venue for a day out...meeting, eating, conversing and shopping” (Cherry & Cullen, 2007).

## **EXHIBITION REVIEW**

In addition to relevant case studies presented in the accompanying curatorial essay, specifically Fred Wilson, this section presents alternative precedent for the opposing curatorial atmospheres referenced in this thesis exhibit. Taking inspiration from both neutral white cube spaces and atypical viewing settings simultaneously, *FOMO* at Drake One Fifty in Toronto and

the exhibition entitled *Bentu: Chinese Artists in a Time of Turbulence and Transformation* at the Louis Vuitton Foundation Museum in Paris, France provide examples of these two contrasting environments. These opposing exhibitions reflect the type of spaces that this thesis refers to, that are then suggested on a much smaller scale in *Atmospheres of Production* in order to fit the scope of this project.

### ***FOMO***

**Curated by Mia Nielsen**

**Drake 150, Toronto, Canada**

**September 30, 2016 – September 8, 2017**

Drake One Fifty, a restaurant in the financial district of Toronto, part of the Drake Hotel properties, is a space for site-specific installations with a unique method of displaying art that contrasts with a traditional white-cube gallery. *FOMO*, the 4<sup>th</sup> annual art flip of the Drake One Fifty, features 6 artists: Wendy White, Kristen Schiele, Michael Vickers, Shaun Gladwell, Jen Mann and Nicole Beno, that will live in the space for an entire year. *FOMO* displays all site-specific works created for this particular space by these both local and international artists based GIFs and pops of neon. As the curatorial statement explains “Drake One Fifty is a space that is rooted in the design traditions of the 20th century, our 4th annual exhibition will propel the space into the future, putting a millennial spin on the environment” (The Drake Hotel, 2016). Curated by Mia Nielsen the show brings a criticality to the space that is not otherwise there, demanding attention from patrons. Nielsen admitted at the artist talk, “as a curator to come into a restaurant where a lot of thought and planning went into it and to mess it up a little is the most satisfying thing.”

In many ways, these intricate and punchy artworks were perfectly chosen to disrupt the space. A painting hanging behind a table in a typical restaurant doesn't often make a large

impact. However, at a venue dedicated to art, constantly incorporating new installations, the location turns into that of an alternative gallery space. Starting off with the mixed media installation in the entrance way, entitled *No Man is an Island/ Every Man is an Island* by Michael Vickers, you take immediate notice of the bright neon lights. A collection of items with printed patterns on aluminum, and found objects, this piece, as with the others in this exhibit are extremely intricate and as you stare at them there is more to be revealed and take note of. Similarly, Kristen Schiele's collage of silkscreen, coloured paper and acrylic mural, entitled *Beach Party*, on the wall is bright and vibrant with intricate details that occupies the attention of the viewer, even when competing with a bustling restaurant. In addition, this space offers the unique experience for the viewer to be immersed in the art. Schiele's piece is painted in a large alcove that encompasses a booth and two tables. As with the other pieces in the restaurant, viewers spend time with the art, while talking to friends, drinking and eating, acting as they normally would, while referring back to the art at different times. In a typical exhibition space, with the typical expected behavior, people quietly observe pieces for a short period of time while being watched by other viewers and security guards. Non-traditional spaces such as Drake One Fifty enable viewers to linger with the pieces longer and exist normally in the space with them; in the case of Schiele's piece, quite literally be enveloped by the work.

In the case of *FOMO*, there are small didactic labels to accompany each piece that are hard to find or notice. This is in many ways to the benefit of the exhibit as it becomes part of the space, almost creating a scavenger hunt to find the pieces. In this way, the artwork draws the viewer into itself without the accompaniment of traditional curatorial cues such as having the piece on a blank wall with a clear label. The exhibition design of these traditionally curated spaces also takes into account the natural flow of people through the space and how that enables

the viewer to interact and experience the exhibit. Although the placement of the art was obviously considered at Drake One Fifty, there are many limitations that do not exist in a white cube gallery. Codes and regulations for restaurants, the ability for waiting staff to maneuver the tables, the constantly reconfigured furniture that fills the space are all compounding factors.

With the introduction of FOMO at Drake One Fifty there is a noticeable change in the environment created in the space. However, despite the atmosphere created by FOMO and the impactful artworks that immediately draw the attention of the viewer, the pre-existing décor of the restaurant remains extremely prominent and some may argue it is to the detriment of the art.

***Bentu: Chinese artists in a time of turbulence and transformation***  
**Curated by Philip Tinari and Laurence Bossé**  
**Louis Vuitton Foundation Museum in Paris France**  
**January 27 to May 2, 2016**

*Bentu: Chinese artists in a time of turbulence and transformation* was a very successful exhibit due to the way the art was displayed and curated that wedded the architecture, the exhibit, and the experience for the audience. *Bentu* was the first exhibition devoted to contemporary Chinese art in France in the past 10 years and was a collaboration between the Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art of Beijing (UCCA Beijing) and the LV Museum (Fondation Louis Vuitton, 2016). This exhibition consisted of 12 artists whose work was brought to the gallery from UCCA Beijing for the purposes of the exhibition, in combination with a few specific pieces from the permanent collection of the LV Foundation that complemented the theme. The work of these artists from mainland China depict a culture and society that appears to be in a state of flux, undergoing change, and yet still adhering to tradition. As well, the name *Bentu* translates into “native soil” indicating the attachment to the land, the identity of individuals as well as the conflict between urban and rural space (Fondation Louis Vuitton, 2016). This theme was

prevalent and cohesive as the exhibit offers many unique voices and interpretations of identity and culture, using a vast variety of mediums and aesthetics. Though their process is not highly publicized or discussed, it appears as if Philip Tinari, Director of the Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art, chose the art for the exhibition, while Laurence Bossé, curator at the Louis Vuitton Foundation was responsible for the arrangement of the art.

The Louis Vuitton Museum, designed by architect Frank Gehry is a marvel – with viewing decks throughout the building, looking out at different views of the city, and all-encompassing windows and skylights that blurred the lines between the interior and exterior of the building. Gehry created the most brilliant of contemporary gallery spaces. The exhibition begins on the fourth floor of the building, immediately bringing the viewer to a level that provides wonderful vistas of the city of Paris. The architecture makes the space incredibly impactful, and also maneuvers the audience throughout the exhibit in a decidedly deliberate but thoughtful manner. Simply put, the space lends itself to the display. Completed in October 2014, architect Frank Gehry presented a space true to his design style. Gehry has described the structure as a “cloud of glass” or “a sailing ship”, creating a sense of movement with its curved reflective glass exterior (Chazan, 2014). The building itself is stunning primarily due to the massive glass sail-like structures that can move, depending on the season and the light. Large natural wood structural beams combined with multiple viewing decks allow the building to become part of the sky as well as reflect the Bois de Boulogne Public Park that surrounds the building. Providing 41,441 square feet of exhibition space that translates into 11 galleries of various sizes, the museum exists on a fountain and a pool of water that enter the museum area (Chazan, 2014). These features, along with minimal white walls and never-ending windows and skylights, allow for the ability to view art close to nature, or in the clouds.



Peter Friess (2006), has said that “museums need to be built from the inside out, not the reverse”, and Frank Gehry apparently did just that. He started with three groups of box-like structures that contained the galleries and surrounded these with further structures that house the stairs and elevators (Goldberger, 2014). Over these boxes, Gehry arranged the sails which incongruously represent the roof. A recent Vanity Fair article says of the LV museum “when there is no art in the building, it feels incomplete, which is arguably the most important test of whether the architecture is too assertive” (Goldberger, 2014). With the use of very simple materials, white walls with no details, accents of wood and glass, there is nothing to detract from the art and a backdrop is provided for which to view and contemplate the art. Perhaps it is the light coming into the space and its juxtaposition with nature that creates a spiritual impact and a likeness to a place of worship. *Bentu* exhibited a variety of different artists ranging from painting, to large sculptural installations, to video and performative pieces. Each piece was placed in a way to highlight its qualities, whether it be under a skylight, in a large open space, in a more intimate reflective space, or a dark immersive viewing room. *Bentu* is the idyllic example of an exhibit in a neutral gallery setting that has the power to work in tandem with the art to create a meaningful experience for the viewer.

## **INSTALLATION CONCEPT AND DESIGN**

Using the examples of Drake 150 and the Louis Vuitton Museum among many others as precedent, *Atmospheres of Production* was designed and installed using both the art and the space as a guide for the interaction the audience would have with the pieces. As the viewer walked into the space, the first piece of art in direct line with the door was *Folded Table (Composition 2)*. This sculptural piece which combined vinyl cloth feathered from shaped birch

panel was placed in the window in order to activate the area. Similar textured sculptural pieces combining wood and vinyl were placed throughout the exhibit in order to create a unity and cohesion throughout the space. Beside this piece, an indent in the wall featured the curatorial statement, the name of the artist and title of the exhibit. Prominently placed on a large wall opposite the door were two 59”x45” mesh posters. Featuring bold blue and green solid backdrops, and bright floral patterns these works caught the eye of people walking by the window, as well as viewers entering the space. These works were held up informally by small silver bulldog clips. In keeping with how the artist prefers the mesh to be hung, the pieces were draped from the top and fell against the wall, curling up at the bottom as opposed to being pinned flush to the wall in all 4 corners – giving the poster a most relaxed effect. On the opposing wall, two pieces entitled Blinds (Composition 1) and Blinds (Composition 2) were black and white vinyl prints hung using T-pins as a 3-dimensional installation creating a rippling effect coming out from the wall. Being the only two black and white pieces in the exhibit, they were separated by a large purple mesh piece to break up the view.

The front portion of the exhibit was labelled Part A, and it extended to a 6’0”x 6’0”x 4” temporary drywall wall partially dividing Part A from Part B. On the front of this lower, temporary wall in Part A hung two bright colorful framed prints; similarly, two prints of the same kind were hung identically on the back of the wall in Part B. Given the nature of Part A compared to Part B the second pair were hung in a darker setting with lights aimed to illuminate the pieces. Whereas the similar prints in Part A were lit by natural daylight and track lighting. Aiding in the division of Part A and B, a sculptural wood pole featuring feathered vinyl strips was strategically placed in the passageway. Placed as to not impede the view of the other works in Part A from any angle in the space, this pole caught the eye of the viewer, putting Part B in the

background and further segmenting the areas. Next to the temporary wall in Part B, a series of 8 small intricate line drawings hung in white frames. In a created alcove, viewers could more intimately approach the pieces to look more closely as these were the most detailed. On the opposite wall hung another mesh piece, that seemed to present a different effect due to the more specific and shadowed lighting in Part B. Past the eclectic and vibrant bar area in Part B, there was a recess built into the space above a countertop. Above this counter hung two more wood sculptural pieces with vinyl strips that were bolted to the wall. Within the recess by the bathroom hung the last small collaged line drawing to activate the space.

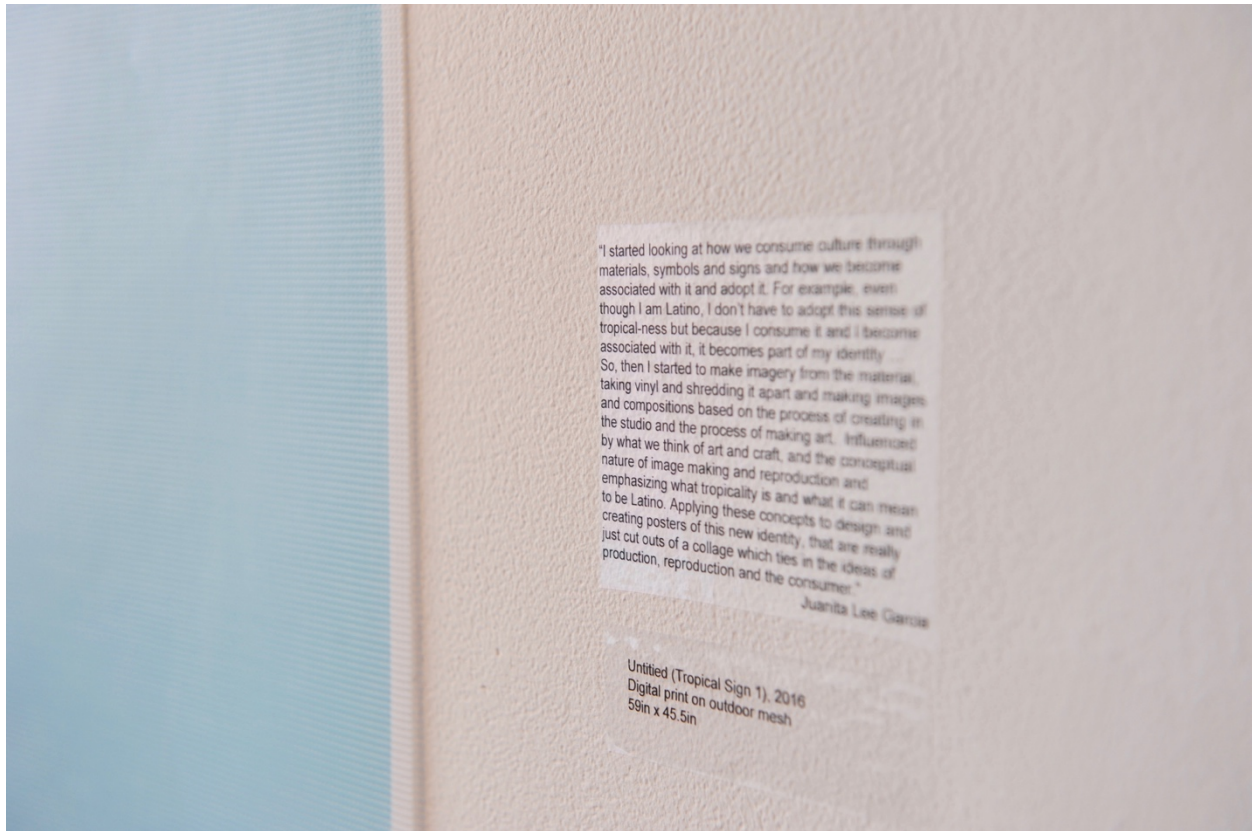


**Figure 6.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of the left half of the exhibit taken from Part A. Artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016

Hung using a variety of techniques from freestanding sculpture, to clips, to traditional hooks, wood bolted to the wall, T-pins etc., the exhibit used curatorial strategies in combination with the pre-existing design of the space in order to highlight the work of the artist and promote the movement through the space and the active engagement with the artworks. The work of only one artist was used in order to reduce excess elements affecting the data collected, as well as to create a sense of unity through the space although it was divided in its atmosphere and design.

The site, Milk Glass Gallery, further supported the premise of the research which was to create both a typical contemporary exhibition space with a neutral viewing environment alongside an atypical viewing experience where the art is either complemented by or fighting with opposing design elements. The front half of the space featured a large window with natural light, with a long narrow space that was fitting to divide into two. The bar area had many distracting design elements such as colored shelves, bottles of alcohol, quirky memorabilia and unique lighting that all contributed to creating a separate environment from the front half and provided elements for the art to contend with. Offering both a space typically used for galleries, with traditional adjustable track lighting and tall white walls and a visually dense bar area, Milk Glass was an appropriate choice for the execution of this thesis.

## DIDACTICS



**Figure 7.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of the didactic information beside *Untitled (Tropical Sign 1)*, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016

As evaluated by Gail Gregg, labels and didactic material can have a large impact on the relationship between viewer and artwork. For this reason, *Atmospheres of Production* used labelling and didactic material strategically. Using small clear unified labels throughout the entire exhibit listing the title of the artwork, dimensions, medium and date, these labels demarcated each piece. In Part A of the exhibit, each label was placed at exactly the same height and exactly the same distance away from the piece, each to the right of the work. In Part B, given that the walls were not uniform, and the setting was more casual, each label was placed appropriately next to the piece given the particular circumstance. For example, on the cluster of 8 smaller works, the labels hung according to the order of the pieces in a stacked column to the left

of the work where they were easier to be read. In Part A, accompanying quotes from the artist Lee Garcia were typed on similar clear labels in first person outlining her intentions behind the works. Each block quote was then placed above the other labels near artworks that were relevant to what the quote was defining. No such labels were included in Part B. These labels read:

I started looking at how we consume culture through materials, symbols and signs and how we become associated with it and adopt it. For example, even though I am Latino, I don't have to adopt this sense of tropical-ness but because I consume it and I become associated with it, it becomes part of my identity ... So, then I started to make imagery from the material, taking vinyl and shredding it apart and making images and compositions based on the process of creating in the studio and the process of making art. Influenced by what we think of art and craft, and the conceptual nature of image making and reproduction and emphasizing what tropicality is and what it can mean to be Latino. Applying these concepts to design and creating posters of this new identity, that are really just cut outs of a collage which ties in the ideas of production, reproduction and the consumer. – Juanita Lee Garcia

Allowing myself to use my body to make the work, slashing it, cutting it, assembling it and reproducing it, it is very labour intensive because of the amount of physical work that goes into it. It's almost labor intensive to the point of meditation; not labour intensive to the point of mindless work but it was very meditative active work that was also very self reflective. – Juanita Lee Garcia

I research the material's origin and its production. How it spread as a material, how it became mass produced, how it became used in the spaces its used in. Research is an integral part of my work, understanding it inside and out so I can feel like I am authentically working with it and not just working through it, and how it fits into the greater context of what I am interested in. Considering everything from identity and community, the spread of the image and image making, my art practice and who I am as an artist and what it means to go to a secluded studio to make work and develop images that contribute to something more than just décor. – Juanita Lee Garcia

In addition to labelling, the curatorial statement was printed in a large vinyl label directly across from the door at the front of the exhibit. Placed appropriately to view initially, the paragraph was headed by the title of the exhibit in large letters, followed by the name of the artist.

## **LIGHTING**

The lighting differed between Part A and B as a strategy to both define the two spaces as distinct, as well as to create a specific environment. In keeping with contemporary gallery conventions in order to create a space that mimicked this atmosphere, the track lighting that was present in the Part A portion was used to complement the natural light coming in from the front window. This natural light, in combination with the ceiling lights that were directed to hit a focal point on each piece created a wall-washing effect over the pieces. This was slightly altered at night when the natural light was not present, however the track lights still created a bright space. In Part B a variety of unique light fixtures were present in the space that added an element of décor. These lights were hung over the bar as well as in an alcove where two sculptural works hung in symmetry with the lights (see Figure 15). In addition, the area to the left of the bar, behind the temporary wall required extra lighting. This was done by adding temporary additional LED lighting onto the ceiling and directed towards the 8 smaller pieces, as well as a floor lamp with an incandescent bulb pointing up into this general area. The unified use of warm lightbulbs in this space was purposefully creating a more inviting space.

## **METHODOLOGY**

My area of interest is the impact of curatorial strategies and exhibition design on the ability to engage audiences. Because this has only become a topic recently introduced to academic literature with minimal theoretical framework and historical discourse the best method of analysis was to conduct a small pilot project and evaluate the findings. A larger experiment including an exhibit on a much greater scale would hold more merit; however, this thesis begins to evaluate this topic and contribute to the discussion while proving that research on a larger

scale could be successfully conducted in the future and yield relevant and useful results to the curatorial field.

I chose two methods of evaluation for this exhibition to determine if there was a preference for one portion of the exhibition space relative to the other based on levels of engagement. The first was quantitative - viewers were given a simple questionnaire which posed questions relating to their potential space preference of the exhibition. Each question on this survey had 2 answers, either 'yes' or 'no' or 'Part A' or 'Part B'. (refer to the survey Appendix F). This questionnaire provided responses that were tabulated and formulated into quantitative data that provided the percentage of participants that gave a certain answer. Completion of this questionnaire was optional, confidential and anonymous. The second method of evaluation was qualitative and consisted of 3 focus groups of approximately 6-10 people each. Participants were recruited at, and prior to the exhibition by word of mouth or additionally in response to online and poster advertising by emailing a specific account to indicate their interest in participating in one of the focus groups. The email account will be deleted at the completion of the thesis process so that privacy is maintained. The focus groups were held during the exhibition in the same space as the exhibition, and I was the moderator. The focus groups were scheduled at different times in order to attract a larger more diverse audience; these included midday on a weekday, midday on a weekend, and a weekday evening as to accommodate many types of schedules. These various times also provided different lighting, contrasting views between daylight and evening light in case opinions changed. In addition, additional quantitative information was collected from the focus group participants, to determine if there were specific opinions or perspectives of a defined age range, or a self-proclaimed art knowledge. This information was obtained through a questionnaire provided at the beginning of each focus group



(see Appendix I). Completion of this questionnaire was anonymous, and optional, and if a person chose not to complete it, there were no consequences relating to their participation in the subsequent focus group. However, all participants completed the questionnaire.

Focus groups are a useful form of qualitative research that provide the opportunity to obtain a large number of opinions in a relatively short time compared to either open-ended individual interviews or participant observation (Morgan, 1997, p. 7). For example, it has been shown that two focus groups of 8 people each would provide a similar number of ideas as 10 individual interviews in far less time (Morgan, 1997, p. 14). Focus groups seek out opinions and perspectives on a specific topic that is directed by the moderator. It is important that the discussion in focus groups is not leading, but instead focused on the topic. In this case, the topic of space preference in an art work exhibit was not considered controversial, and for this reason participants willingly provided their personal opinions and perspectives.

The same pre-conceived questions were posed to each group and were limited to a maximum of 4 or 5. (see focus group script and question list - Appendix H). “Self-reported behavior” was a dominant theme and is considered a reliable source of information (Morgan, 1997, p. 17). For example, participants were asked “which room did you spend more time in?” as opposed to “which room did you prefer?” because behavior can encourage people to think about their actions, and not just reply with expected or anticipated answers (Morgan, 1997, p. 17). In this case, where exhibition space preference was discussed, participants were asked an either/or question without being influenced by the moderator. These questions helped to not only gain opinions and perspectives but also provide an opportunity to try and determine why there was a specific preference for a space, and not just express the preference.

In this situation, as there was a strong preexisting expectation for the research in terms of a goal to obtain a variety of opinions, a more structured, and directed focus group agenda was utilized along with a high level of moderator participation (Morgan, 1997, p. 39). However, generic probes were also used. For example, when a participant introduced a key word or concept relevant to the topic, then the resulting comment and question used was ““That’s something I am definitely interested in hearing more about. What can any of you tell us about that?” ” (Morgan, 1997, p. 47). The focus groups were recorded, and the tapes transcribed by me following each focus group. Key words and phrases (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, p. 74) were looked for, and then organized into distinct groups leading to proposals and potential generalizations related to the information obtained. These key words and phrases were utilized to recognize trends in the overall visitor experience. This body of material was then compared to existing literature relating to the topic (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, p. 10). In addition, the demographic factors relating to age range and art knowledge were tabulated.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS**

Following discussion in the focus groups from a diverse audience, both in age range and art experience as the demographic factors noted, a consensus was achieved that the differences between the two spaces affected the way people viewed and experienced the art. Roughly 100 people visited this exhibit, including approximately 60 at the opening reception as well as those who came to participate in focus groups. Of this 100 people, 57 provided responses through surveys and 24 participated in focus groups. The thesis research and in particular the survey questions, all advertising material and the focus group moderator script were all approved by the OCADU Research Ethics Board in pairing with a standard research participant consent form.

The survey was optional and confidential as was the demographic questionnaire provided to the focus group participants. The focus groups were optional and for people who wished to join and have an open discussion about their opinions in relation to the exhibit, perhaps gaining new knowledge and insight into the curatorial field. Participants agreed to audiotaping by signing a consent form and the attribution of direct quotes. By the third and final focus group no new evidence was being added, which is a testament to surveying the appropriate number of people in order to gain accurate insight (Morgan, 1997, p. 43).

## SURVEY RESPONSE

A full summation of the comments and data collected from the surveys can be found in Appendix G. Over half of the attendees of the exhibit provided feedback in the form of a survey. This included many written comments in the comment section and notations to the side of each question. The results are as follows: 79% said that they noticed a difference between Part A and Part B and 51% said they found themselves spending more time in Part A rather than Part B with one person saying both and 2 abstaining. This was supported by the 58% who stated they preferred Part A. A large majority of the survey participants (93%) said there were artworks that resonated with them more than others and 68% felt this was impacted by the way it was displayed. Again, this was supported by the response indicating that 88% said their interaction with the art was impacted by the way it was displayed. Additionally, some participants gave feedback saying “not for me” or highlighted that they didn’t see a difference between the spaces. Although this was a very small percentage this feedback is just as valid and important to note.

Many of the surveys were filled out during the opening which was well attended. For this reason, many of the comments had to do with the difference in ambiance between the two spaces

when the bar actually served as a bar and an area for people to drink and relax; this also resulted in comments to the nature of “difficulties creating relationship with the art in Part B because there were so many people, and thoughts/vision would get interrupted.” Generally, however the consensus in the comments section was that Part A allowed for the better viewing of the art, but Part B was a better, more intimate and inviting environment. Many others indicated exactly which pieces resonated with them the most – this usually coincided with the part of the exhibit they had given a preference for, but not in every case.

#### FOCUS GROUP RESPONSE

Unlike the survey responses, the focus group responses were evaluated in terms of the demographics of the participants and also in terms of the responses and discussion during the focus group conversations. Three focus groups were held at a range of times in order to fit varying schedules – this was partly responsible for making the focus groups diverse in demographic markers. Focus group participants were recruited through the social media posts, posters and word of mouth. It is also important to note, as the scope of this project is small the audience it reached is also small. Only two demographic markers were examined – age range and self-proclaimed art knowledge. Given the limited scale of this study, evaluating the research in terms of broader demographic markers would be well outside the scope of this investigation.

The focus group demographics data is presented in Appendix K. The majority (54%) of the participants were in the 18-29 age group, with 12.5%, 21% and 12.5% in the remaining age groups. There was a broad range of self-proclaimed art knowledge in the members of the focus groups with 21% claiming almost no exposure to art galleries, 46% having had some visits to art galleries and 25% having extensive experience visiting galleries. As well, there were 2

participants who were both current or past art students, as well as current or former gallery workers. In the article, *Everyday Encounters with Art: Comparing Expert and Novice Experiences*, the authors expected to see a difference in viewer response during interviews depending on art knowledge, but didn't (Foreman-Wernet & Dervin, 2016). In this study, there was no apparent difference in the participation of focus group members depending on art knowledge, as all focus groups members tended to participate relatively equally.

The focus group conversations occurred in the gallery while it was closed, and this gave the participants the opportunity to re-examine the artwork prior to the discussion. The focus groups showed a variety of interactions and dynamics. All of the groups had a large range in art knowledge and sizable age range with the exception of the second focus group whose members were all in the same age group but varied in art knowledge. With the most familiarity between the group members and the lack of age discrepancy this second focus group discussion was the most open and free flowing. Focus group discussions were held in a circular formation at the front of the gallery with a microphone in the middle. Each focus group would start off by going around in the circle and each person would contribute a comment and by the end of the conversation it became much more engaged and organic. The second focus group however was much more of a fluid discussion throughout where the responses of each participant was often in relation to one another which resulted in a much more in-depth analysis of the exhibit and the impact of display. The sessions were recorded then transcribed and analyzed for trends that repeatedly appeared.

One trend that was discussed was the atmosphere or how each space made them feel – which was led by the questions, however there were a lot of similar points of view. It was discussed frequently how often those with an extensive art background preferred Part A because

it was more familiar to them, while many who felt uncomfortable in typical gallery settings because of a lack of experience preferred Part B. When describing the atmosphere of Part B almost everyone used the words ‘intimate,’ ‘cozy,’ ‘inviting,’ ‘welcoming,’ ‘relaxed,’ ‘warm’ and ‘accessible.’ It was brought up in each session that it resembled a more domestic living environment which could be why people often found it more comfortable. Notably one participant explained:

(Part B) most reminds me of a consumer experience, sort of like being in an IKEA where I feel very welcome to check out the objects and to have a judgment about them, and to have a sense of authority about them as I do when I’m shopping. Whereas Part A felt sort of intimidating, and thank you for reminding me that this is not natural, this is not taken for granted as to how a gallery is supposed to feel. As soon as I walked in, I felt intimidated, and I felt I had to behave a certain way, and you reminded me that I don’t have to feel that way when I’m looking at art.

In many ways, the relation between the “domestic” (Part B) and the traditional gallery environment (Part A) is interesting to point out as it was also noted by 3 participants that they could picture the art in their house more easily when it was viewed in the more relaxed and home-like setting of Part B. This ability to transfer the art into a domestic setting could be used as a strategy to promote the sale of artworks especially when visitors are unable to make the same connection in a white cube space. Another focus group participant commented:

I like to look at art without the noise around it because it allows you to focus on the particular piece as opposed to the distractions of things around it, it’s probably more conventional gallery space in the front. I like B, and the one thing I like about B it makes you perhaps have a perspective about what a piece of art would look like in your house, because it is more like your own home. Sometimes a piece of art looks great in a gallery, but then you get it home and it is sort of overpowered by everything around it. Part B lets you see all the overpowering things around it, and lets you see the art in that space.

When asked to describe the atmosphere of Part A, participants provided a broad range of descriptors from ‘bright,’ ‘energetic,’ ‘intimidating,’ ‘open,’ ‘vibrant’ or ‘just a typical gallery setting.’ However, when these participants were not specifically asked about the atmosphere of

Part A, the non-directed discussion was limited to the art and how the space impacted their viewing of the art – whether in a positive or negative way. This is interesting as Part A highlights the art in the more neutral setting, which was reflected in the discussion. This resulted in a range of perspectives: some said Part B allowed them to engage in the art more because the space was less forced and more relaxed, some people thought the art was lost in Part B and seemed more ‘decorative.’ For example, one participant said

I think that back there (Part B) you can passively absorb the art, because it’s just around you in the space that you are in, and it is less forced to me. I can understand a traditional space, but you have to have the right mind set for it, there, (Part B) you just get to be among the art.

Some people felt that the open space and airy environment in Part A allowed them to view the art more carefully and with more consideration with each piece. Others found themselves engaging more intimately and studying the pieces more in Part B because they enjoyed the space more and wanted to spend more time there. Overall the general consensus was that people saw a difference in the atmospheres between the two areas that affected their desire to engage with the art and the reason behind this varied greatly for different people.

In terms of curatorial strategies, the presence of the natural light and how it created a positive experience in Part A was a common thread in all the discussions. Alternatively, the yellower tones of lighting in Part B were often cited as one of the reasons the environment was warmer and more comforting.

I didn’t see it at night, so I think the lighting changes things. Obviously because there is a divider, and its farther back its way warmer in Part B and much cooler lighting in Part A. There are similar pieces of art in A and B, but for example, I feel like the natural light reflects off of the mesh pieces in the front differently than it does the peach one (Part B). In these ones (part A), you see the depth and the different qualities the material brings to the piece, however in the warm lighting its still a beautiful piece but you don’t appreciate that depth.

With the didactic material, as previously discussed, people often have a range of opinions. Some argued that they preferred the lack of reading material in Part B because they could more freely interpret for themselves, others expressed opinions similar to the following comments of this participant:

The front seems more like a gallery, where I am supposed to be looking at specific pieces. In the back, there are not blurbs, or text that help you with the pieces, so it is up to you to determine your own impression of the works. Part A demanded attention on the pieces and Part B was like more intimidating because I didn't know what to say.

A more agreed upon concept was that the viewers preferred the more personalized text, referring to the quotes of the artist's intentions – “which allows you to engage in it a lot more. Hearing about what she's thinking which is much more interesting.”

The placement of the pieces was also evaluated in terms of which pieces resonated with participants the most. This also received a large cross section of responses; some varying responses included the following:

In part B on the right, folded table 2 and 3, I feel like they would have lost so much intimacy and movement if they were placed in Part A because they are so dynamic and they are folded and there are shadows that come into play. And the structure of the lighting in that space is really nice and enclosed and you can sit there and stare at it or talk to other people. So, I think the placement was great.

The two framed ones here impacted me the most. I think maybe because they are on the temporary wall made them pop, the fact that they are framed as well.

For me what I felt were the most effective were the two blinds, she mentions in the quotes that she uses tropical colours, but they are the only two without colour, but they are the same print as the other works so there's this interesting congruency, but I think placing the two dark pieces with a very bright piece in the middle was a very interesting contrast that almost stopped in a way, not in a bad way, but almost took you out of this pattern, and it really made me look at it. I really liked the blinds because they were so different, instead of going with the assumption that they are all connected because they are all part of the same exhibit, it made me stop and really look at it and think about it and realize its placement.



For me what I thought was interesting was the way I noticed things and the strategic placement. So, when I walked in I didn't even notice the pole, I didn't even register it. But when I was talking to people in the back, the folded table pieces were the first pieces I really registered and noticed – maybe because it was in an alcove or whatever the placement was, but now when I came back in I couldn't believe I didn't notice that as soon as I walked in because they are from the same series. So, I think because of the placement it drew my eye to the folded tables. But that made me inevitably almost appreciate part A in a different way and take more time to understand the connection between the two which I thought was really interesting.

Overall the feedback from the exhibit was positive about the level of engagement and the resulting interest in the art. Participants had extremely constructive and interesting perspectives on what they had seen. A noticeable trend was the appreciation for the unity throughout the space although the environment was different - the viewing experience was cohesive. The participants were eager to talk about the art and each had pieces that stood out to them – which justifies Juanita Lee Garcia as an appropriate choice for this particular exhibit. Her artworks were described as vibrant, contemporary, abstract, and intriguing. This is expressed in the following focus group participant quotes:

That's what I liked about the exhibit is the continuity, and how everything is the exact same print just applied in different methods so it made me think about her thought process and how she made the art in the sense that you walk in and see the blue and green ones, then you see the same ones but framed, and then you see the prints but shredded

I didn't find myself struggling with what they meant which was really nice, because sometimes when I go into galleries I feel like I need to understand. Whereas PART A was really nice because of the little descriptions where she talked about shredding and the actions, it's me participating in the actions, and so I can visualize her printing and manipulating and shredding as opposed to what it means or why the blinds are that colour. I don't find myself getting existential with it which I appreciate, and I find that fits in with the space more because the space is small and intimate and there's a bar and it resembles a home and you don't want to be existential in a place that you live so I appreciated that.

The focus group participants all agreed that there was a difference in the atmosphere of the two spaces (Parts A and B) within the gallery, though the interpretation and sense of this difference

varied. As well, all agreed that these different atmospheres impacted their ability and interest in engaging with the art.

## **CONCLUSION**

The research conducted, as part of this thesis, showed on a small scale that the changes in environment and curatorial strategies affected the way visitors interacted with art. It is well established that the placement of art has a powerful connection to audience engagement, which is further linked to visitor experience. As the literature has shown, and this study has highlighted, the traditional white-cube gallery may not always be the ideal viewing space for all gallery visitors. The concept that the art must be presented with few or no impeding elements represents the practice in the typical exhibition space. A potential paradigm shift away from this concept exists in terms of the cultural, societal and aesthetic needs of the gallery visitor. Environments that are welcoming and relaxed may make many types of visitors more inclined to interact with the art. The spectacle gallery, or the blockbuster show may not be necessary – instead a friendly and hospitable space to display art may be all that is needed to attract visitors – or at least those visitors not attracted to the white cube space. Although as has been noted, the kind of interaction visitors have with art varies greatly; however more studies could be conducted to evaluate how different kinds of environment affect different types of interactions, such as stepping towards, or around a work. This thesis has investigated with a limited scope how the environment affects the viewer's relationship with the art; however larger studies could help galleries cater their exhibition design to truly create meaningful experiences that have a lasting impact.

There are several current, thorough reviews of visitor studies, but none contain a method for measuring or defining the depth or degree of the impact of curatorial strategies on the visitor experience. Conducting focus groups proved to be a valuable method of obtaining qualitative data containing opinions and perspectives relating to curatorial strategies and their effect on visitor experience and audience engagement. In addition, a somewhat surprising and beneficial consequence of the focus groups was the knowledge gained by the participants – a number of whom mentioned how much more confident they felt about voicing their opinions on art and subsequent future gallery visits following the discussions.

The quantitative data from the surveys supported the focus group data, and re-affirmed that curatorial strategies affected the way visitors interacted with the art. Lighting, didactic material, spatial design and curatorial strategies were all utilized to create two distinct environments with a cohesive display of artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia throughout the two spaces. Discussions in the focus groups demonstrated that the audience's relationship with both the environment and the art varied greatly based how they viewed the space. The extent to which the environment affects the experience had by the audience was difficult to quantify. Possibly, in similar future studies, questionnaires could be designed with a Likert-type sliding scale that would be more indicative of the level of impact of the curatorial strategies. The data obtained from this small pilot study suggests that further research using similar design strategies could be justified to study the idea that exhibition display holds power over the engagement of the audience despite the previous art experience and age demographic. With a consensus that the two created environments evoked different responses from different participants, more research could be conducted to further measure and determine the extent to which each curatorial strategy can cause desired responses. In order to promote audience engagement with art in a meaningful way,

studies such as these can be used to tailor display to maximize interaction between the visitor and the art. As the role of the curator is crucial in fostering the relationship between the viewer and the presented art, it is their responsibility to take audience engagement strategies into account when developing an exhibit.

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## **APPENDIX A: ARTIST BIO AND CV**

Juanita Lee-Garcia employs strategies of repetition in her process, and repurpose in her image selection to conceptually and materially investigate the potential, and limits, of ethnic décor in consumer culture. Primarily built around a mass-produced a vinyl table cloth and other decorative objects —Lee Garcia’s artistic practice shifts between sculptural and conceptual work that mines simple gestures, such as slicing, inserting, folding or continuous printing to build new and abstract forms that are at once unfamiliar yet comforting. Through the work, Lee Garcia explores the history and potential of the image and material, their cultural and social association, and aesthetic feel generated in relation to the public, private, and consumer spaces related to the consumption of cultural identity - specifically that of the Latino. Other fundamental notions in Lee Garcia's work include the durational labour in the act of making, mediation and process that contributes to the visual rhythm of repeated gestures and forms, excess, multiplicity, craft, and the complex notions of taste and class.

Juanita Lee-Garcia received a Master of Fine Arts from Western University in 2016. Previously, Lee-Garcia attended Queen's University where she completed a BFAH in Visual Arts with a Minor in Art History in 2014. She is interested and involved in the fields of Art and Education, and is currently completing a Master of Education in Leadership, Higher and Adult Education at the University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. She is the recipient of multiple academic merit scholarships and awards and has presented at international conferences. She has a social media presence on Instagram @jleegarc where you can find images of current projects on the go including: installations, studio experimentation, and performances.

### **JUANITA LEE GARCIA**

#### **b. 1991**

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA

#### **EDUCATION**

2018 Masters of Education Candidate, Leadership, Higher and Adult Education concurrent with Community Development, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada.

2016 Masters of Fine Arts, Western University, Department of Visual Arts, London, Ontario, Canada.

2016 Certificate in University Teaching and Learning Western University London, Ontario, Canada.

2014 Bachelor of Fine Arts Honours with Distinction, Queen’s University. Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Major in Printmaking



Minor in Art History

### **SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS**

2015-2016 Ontario Graduate Student Scholarship (OGS) Western University  
2015-2016 Canada Graduate Student Research Scholarship Western University  
2014-2015 Canada Graduate Student Research Scholarship Western University  
2014 Western University Chair Entrance Scholarship  
2013-2014 Queen Elizabeth Aiming for the Top Scholarship, Ontario Government  
2012 Queen's University Kathleen Ryan International Exchange Bursary  
2012 Queen's University Exchange Study Award-Domestic Students  
2012-2013 Queen Elizabeth Aiming for the Top Scholarship, Ontario Government  
2011-2012 Queen Elizabeth Aiming for the Top Scholarship, Ontario Government  
2010 Queen's University Entrance Scholarship

### **RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:**

2015-2016. Teaching Assistant, VAS1020 Foundations Art for Professor. Tricia Johnson, Western University Visual Arts Department, London, Ontario  
2015. Art Educator and Summer Camp Co-Director at Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa, Ontario  
2014-2015. Teaching Assistant, VAS1020 Foundations Art for Professor. Tricia Johnson, Western University Visual Arts Department, London, Ontario  
2014. Carleton Art Gallery Summer Camp Coordinator and Co-Director at Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa, Ontario

### **SOLO EXHIBITIONS:**

2017. Atmospheres of Production. Milkglass Gallery. Curated for OCAD MFA Curatorial Studies Candidate Maggie Lever. Toronto, Ontario March  
2016. El Paradise, DNA Artspace, London, Ontario. August  
2015. "The Flow," Platform Gallery and Studios, 51 Young Street, Ottawa, Ontario. June  
2013. "Hybrid Figures: Recent Prints by Juanita Lee Garcia." International Learning Centre, Kingston Ontario. December.

### **FEATURED WORKS, GROUP EXHIBITIONS:**

2017. The Benton House, Kitchner, Ontario, February. Curated by Maggie Lever  
2016. To Mexico From Love. Idea Exchange, Cambridge, Ontario, October. Curated by Iga Janik  
2016. Taco Feast Performance. Museum London, London, Ontario, August  
2015. Second Wind, Second Year MFA exhibition ft. Mina Moosavipour, Simone Sciacetti, Jason Stovall. Artlab Gallery, John Labatt Visual Art Centre. October.  
2015. [Un]Bored Graduate Conference, University of Western Ontario, Visual Arts Art History Graduate Conference on Boredom Featured Artist. London, Ontario. March.  
2015. Open Studios. Western University, London, Ontario. March

2014. Where the Line Is Drawn, Bachelor of Fine Arts Honours Graduation Thesis Group Show, Ontario Hall, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. April.

2014. Silent Auction, Kingston Canadian Film Festival, Auction of two works, "Mapping Landscape," (2013) and "Paddler 1" (2014) The Baby Grand Theatre, Kingston, Ontario. February.

2014. BFAH Auction, Tango Nuevo, Kingston, Ontario. March.

2014. Queen's University BFAH Graduate Exhibition Preview, Artel, Kingston, Ontario. February.

2014. Cézanne's Closet, Union Gallery at Ban Righ Hall, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. February.

2013. Woman Recreated Mosaic, Tile E6, Permanent display at Queen's University Human Rights Department, Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Kingston, Ontario. August.

2013. Cézanne's Closet, Union Gallery at Ban Righ Hall, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. February.

2011. Existential-ity, Two person show. Photographic/Video collaboration with Maggie Lever. Union Gallery, Kinston, Ontario. March.

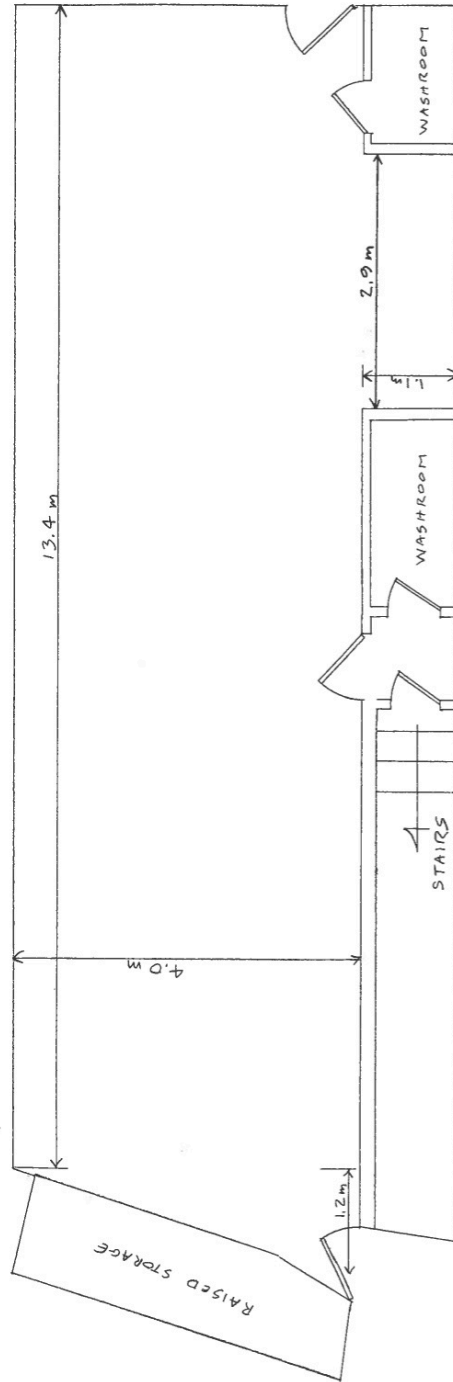
2010. Cages, Sculpture and Painting titled works. Students Exhibition, Ottawa Art Gallery. June.

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

*Boundaries stretched in student show* by Joe Belanger, The London Free Pres. Wednesday, October 7, 2015.  
<http://www.lfpress.com/2015/10/07/boundaries-stretched-in-student-show>  
 Creative conversations with Bob LeDrew and Susan Johnson CKCU 93.1 FM interview on local Ottawa Art, *The Flow*. July 2015  
<http://cod.ckcufm.com/programs/158/22674.html>  
*Memories Adrift, Climbing from Glass Structure* by Juanita Lee Garcia. Rhetoric Magazine online publication, Issue 4. 2014 Vertigo p.17-33  
<http://issuu.com/therhetoric/docs/vertigofinal/41?e=0/12430250>

# APPENDIX B: MILK GLASS FLOORPLAN

MILK GLASS CO.  
 1247 DUNDAS STREET WEST  
 TORONTO ONTARIO  
 M6J 1X6



### AREA CALCULATION

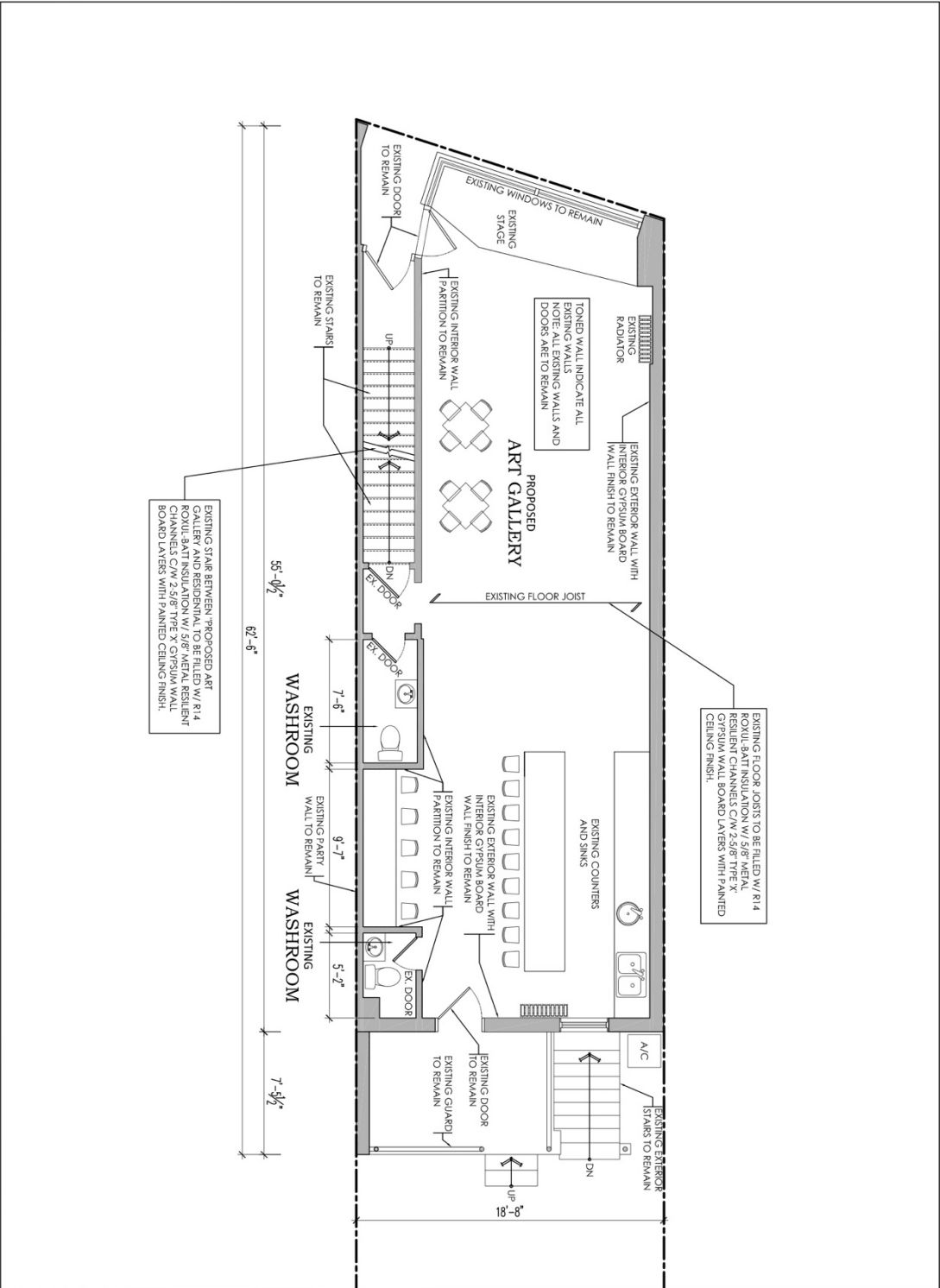
$$13.4 \times 4.0 = 53.6 \text{ m}^2$$

$$2.9 \times 1.1 = 3.2 \text{ m}^2$$

$$4.0 \times 1.2 = 4.8 \text{ m}^2$$

TOTAL 59.2 m<sup>2</sup>

ESTIMATED CAPACITY - 53



**1247 BUILDING**  
1247 DUNDAS STREET  
TORONTO, ONTARIO

EXISTING GROUND FLOOR

DATE:	SCALE:	PROJECT NO.:	CONTRACT NO.:
29 MAR 2013	1/8" = 1'-0"	22	

PROJECT NUMBER:	1312	CLIENT NUMBER:	A-3
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THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF THE ARCHITECT AND IS TO BE USED ONLY FOR THE PROJECT AND SITE SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED HEREIN. IT IS NOT TO BE REPRODUCED, COPIED, OR TRANSMITTED IN ANY FORM OR BY ANY MEANS, ELECTRONIC OR MECHANICAL, INCLUDING PHOTOCOPYING, RECORDING, OR BY ANY INFORMATION STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEM, WITHOUT THE WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE ARCHITECT. ANY REPRODUCTION OR TRANSMISSION OF THIS DOCUMENT WITHOUT THE WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE ARCHITECT IS PROHIBITED. THE ARCHITECT ACCEPTS NO LIABILITY FOR ANY DAMAGE OR INJURY TO PERSONS OR PROPERTY, OR FOR ANY CONSEQUENCES ARISING FROM THE USE OF THIS DOCUMENT, WHETHER SUCH DAMAGE OR INJURY, OR SUCH CONSEQUENCES, ARE CAUSED IN WHOLE OR IN PART BY NEGLIGENCE OR OTHERWISE.

**APPENDIX C: VISUAL DOCUMENTATION OF *ATMOSPHERES OF PRODUCTION***



**Figure 8.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo showing daytime lighting, artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016



**Figure 9.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo showing night lighting, artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016



**Figure 10.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of the left half of the exhibit taken from Part B. Artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016



**Figure 11.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of the right half of the exhibit taken from Part B. Artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016



**Figure 12.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of division between Part A and Part B of the exhibit featuring the temporary wall. Artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016



**Figure 13.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of the left half of Part A, artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016



**Figure 14.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of Part B of the exhibit, artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia



**Figure 15.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of *Folded Table (Composition 2)* and *Folded Table (Composition 3)*, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016





**Figure 16.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of *Gatherings (Composition 4)* and *Gatherings (Composition 5)* in Part A, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016



**Figure 17.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of *Gatherings (Composition 6)* and *Gatherings (Composition 7)* in Part B, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016



**Figure 18.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of *Folded Table (Composition 2)*; *Folded Table (Composition 3)* and *Untitled (Tropical Sign 3)*, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016



**Figure 19.** *Atmospheres of Production* (2017), installation photo of *Untitled (Tropical Sign 4)* and *Blinds (Composition 2)*, Juanita Lee Garcia, 2016

## APPENDIX D: COPIES OF MEDIA MATERIAL

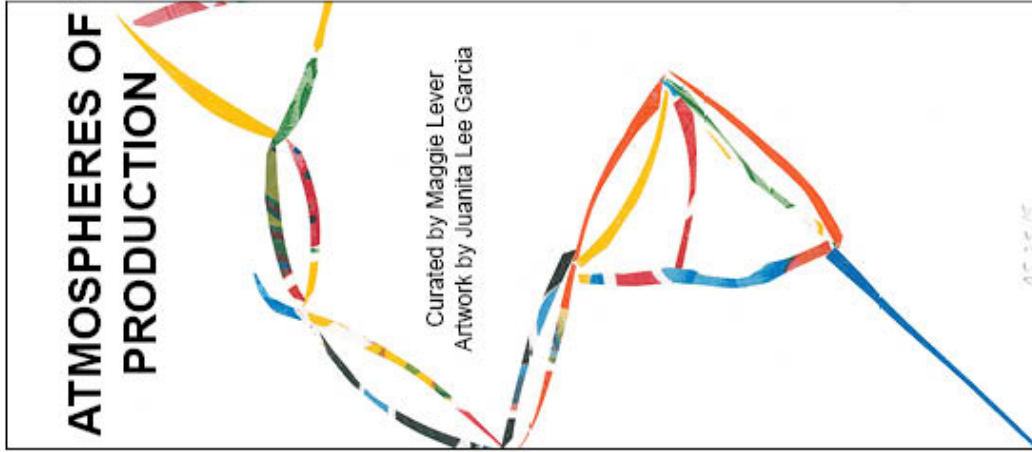
Design: Maggie Lever; Artwork: Juanita Lee Garcia

### FOLDED BROCHURE PAGE 1

#### CURATORIAL STATEMENT

This MFA curatorial thesis exhibit investigates the effects of curatorial and exhibition design strategies on the ability to engage an audience. Displaying the work of Juanita Lee Garcia, *Atmospheres of Production* presents two distinct areas in order to determine if the visitor experience in these differentiated spaces varies. Experience in this instance refers to the interaction of the visitor and the gallery space in order to convey the intention behind Lee Garcia's pieces. This notion of the gallery space is important as the curated atmosphere informs the ability for art to communicate. Another element of experience is that of the production of the artwork, which is as integral to the work of Lee Garcia as the viewing and interpretation process. Her laborious image making method produces art that leaves space for the viewer to construct meaning and decipher what they see; resulting in the completion of the art-making experience.

Please fill out a survey or participate in a focus group in order to provide feedback on *Atmospheres of Production* as the accompanying exhibit for the thesis research entitled *Measuring Elements of Exhibition Design*.



Milk Glass Gallery  
1247 Dundas St West  
March 7-13, 2017  
12-4 pm daily  
Opening reception March 8, 7-10pm

## RESEARCH

Displaying the work of Juanita Lee Garcia, *Atmospheres of Production* displays art using two contrasting atmospheres. The response of the audience will be determined through focus groups and surveys in order to qualify and quantify the findings in attempt to answer the question: To what extent can the environment of an exhibit be altered to affect the experience had by the audience?

Voluntary focus groups will be held for those who wish engage in open discussion regarding your impression of the curatorial strategies. Open to anyone excluding minors.

1 Hour focus groups will be held:  
Friday March 10, 11-12pm  
Saturday March 11, 11-12pm  
Monday March 13, 6-7pm  
RSVP for a focus group:  
[maggie\\_OCADU@gmail.com](mailto:maggie_OCADU@gmail.com)

## JUANITA LEE GARCIA

Born in Bogota Colombia, and currently based in Toronto, Juanita Lee Garcia is an inventive and captivating printmaker. Lee Garcia employs strategies of repetition in her process, and repurpose in her image selection to conceptually and materially investigate the potential, and limits, of ethnic décor in consumer culture. Primarily built around a mass-produced vinyl table cloth and other decorative objects — Lee Garcia's artistic practice shifts between sculptural and conceptual work that mines simple gestures, such as slicing, inserting, folding or continuous printing to build new

and abstract forms that are at once unfamiliar yet comforting. Through the work, Lee Garcia explores the history and potential of the image and material, their cultural and social association, and aesthetic feel generated in relation to the public, private, and consumer spaces related to the consumption of cultural identity - specifically that of the Latino. Other fundamental notions in Lee Garcia's work include the durational labour in the act of making, mediation and process that contributes to the visual rhythm of repeated gestures and forms, excess, multiplicity, craft, and the complex notions of taste and class.

[www.juanita-leegarcia.com](http://www.juanita-leegarcia.com)



FRONT AND BACK OF POSTCARD



**ATMOSPHERES OF PRODUCTION**

Curated by Maggie Lever  
Artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia

Milk Glass Gallery  
1247 Dundas St West  
March 7-13, 2017  
12-4 pm daily  
Opening reception Wednesday March 8, 7-10pm

*Atmospheres of Production* is a component of *Measuring Elements of Exhibition Design*, an OCADU MFA curatorial thesis, investigating the effects of curatorial and exhibition design strategies on the ability to engage an audience.

Voluntary focus groups will be held for those who wish to offer opinions and perspectives relating to the curatorial strategy.

1 Hour focus groups will be held:

Friday March 10, 11-12pm

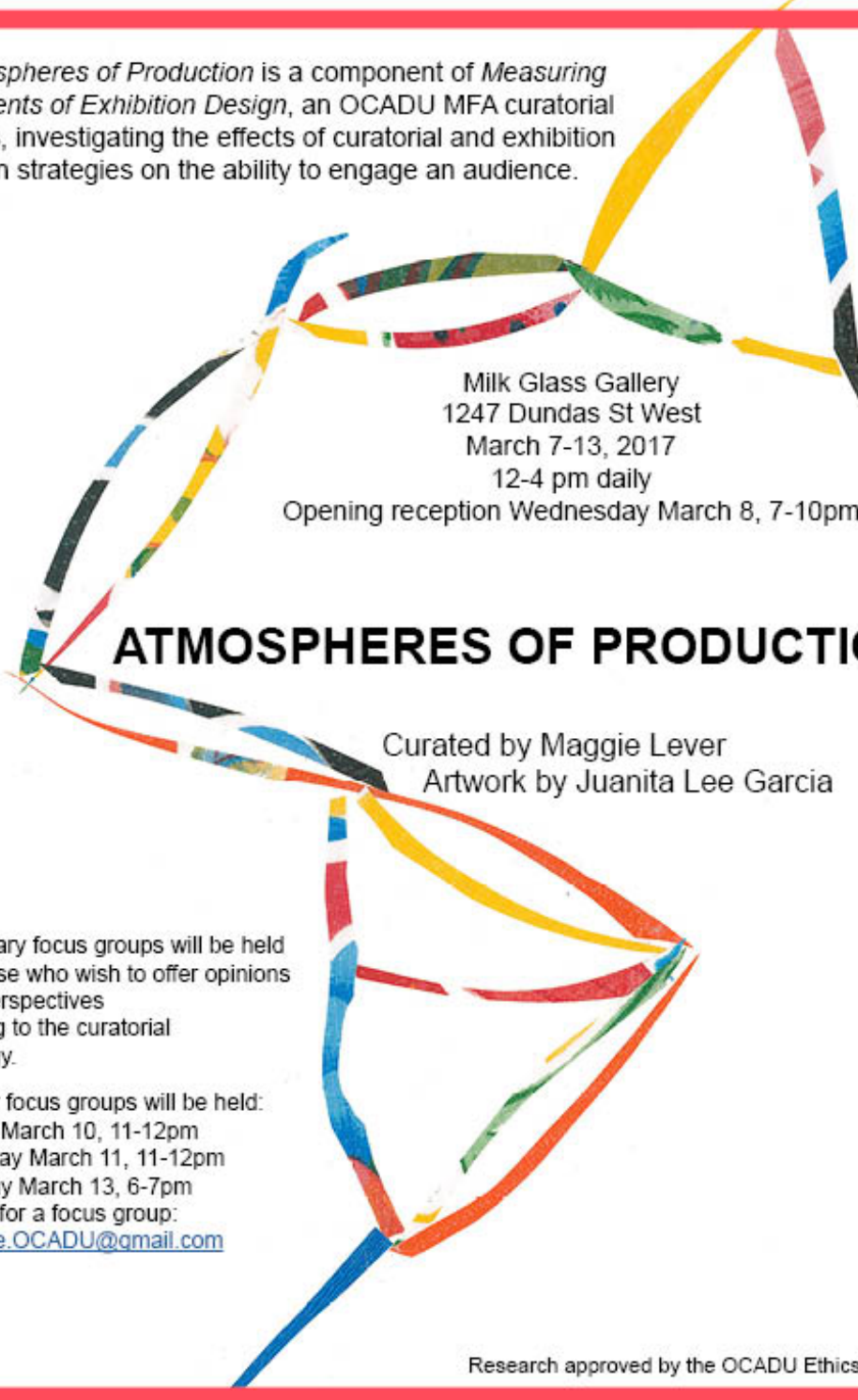
Saturday March 11, 11-12pm

Monday March 13, 6-7pm

RSVP for a focus group: [maggie.OCADU@gmail.com](mailto:maggie.OCADU@gmail.com)

Research approved by the OCADU Ethics Board

POSTER



*Atmospheres of Production* is a component of *Measuring Elements of Exhibition Design*, an OCADU MFA curatorial thesis, investigating the effects of curatorial and exhibition design strategies on the ability to engage an audience.

Milk Glass Gallery  
1247 Dundas St West  
March 7-13, 2017  
12-4 pm daily  
Opening reception Wednesday March 8, 7-10pm

## ATMOSPHERES OF PRODUCTION

Curated by Maggie Lever  
Artwork by Juanita Lee Garcia

Voluntary focus groups will be held for those who wish to offer opinions and perspectives relating to the curatorial strategy.

1 Hour focus groups will be held:  
Friday March 10, 11-12pm  
Saturday March 11, 11-12pm  
Monday March 13, 6-7pm  
RSVP for a focus group:  
[maggie.OCADU@gmail.com](mailto:maggie.OCADU@gmail.com)

Research approved by the OCADU Ethics Board

## APPENDIX E: LIST OF ARTWORKS

Gatherings (Composition 4), 2016  
Digital print collage on Sommerset paper  
32in x 24.6in

Gatherings (Composition 5), 2016  
Digital print collage on Sommerset paper  
32in x 24.6in

Gatherings (Composition 6), 2016  
Digital print collage on Sommerset paper  
32in x 24.6in

Gatherings (Composition 7), 2016  
Digital print collage on Sommerset paper  
32in x 24.6in

Folded Table (Composition 2), 2016  
Birch panel, vinyl cloth  
42in x 42in

Folded Table (Composition 3), 2016  
Birch panel, vinyl cloth  
42in x 42in

Blinds (Composition 1), 2016  
Digital print on vinyl and T-pins  
38in x 38in

Blinds (Composition 2), 2016  
Digital print on vinyl and T-pins  
38in x 38in

Untitled (Tropical Sign 1), 2016  
Digital print on outdoor mesh  
59in x 45.5in

Untitled (Tropical Sign 2), 2016  
Digital print on outdoor mesh  
59in x 45.5in

Untitled (Tropical Sign 3), 2016  
Digital print on outdoor mesh  
59in x 45.5in

Untitled (Tropical Sign 4), 2016  
Digital print on outdoor mesh  
59in x 45.5in

Untitled #25 (Text Series), 2015  
Vinyl collage line drawing on Sommerset paper  
6in x 9in

Untitled #7 (Text Series), 2015  
Vinyl collage line drawing on Sommerset paper  
6in x 9in

Untitled #14 (Text Series), 2015  
Vinyl collage line drawing on Sommerset paper  
6in x 9in

Untitled #27 (Text Series), 2015  
Vinyl collage line drawing on Sommerset paper  
6in x 9in

Untitled #22 (Text Series), 2015  
Vinyl collage line drawing on Sommerset paper  
6in x 9in

Untitled #20 (Text Series), 2015  
Vinyl collage line drawing on Sommerset paper  
6in x 9in

Untitled #24 (Text Series), 2015  
Vinyl collage line drawing on Sommerset paper  
6in x 9in

Untitled #28 (Text Series), 2015  
Vinyl collage line drawing on Sommerset paper  
6in x 9in

Untitled #29 (Text Series), 2015  
Vinyl collage line drawing on Sommerset paper  
6in x 9in

Pole (Composition 1), 2016  
Pine, vinyl cloth  
72in x 12in

Folded Table (Composition 1), 2016  
Birch panel, vinyl cloth  
30in x 57in

## APPENDIX F: SURVEY

### MEASURING ELEMENTS OF EXHIBITION DESIGN SURVEY

This survey is anonymous and entirely voluntary therefore feel free to skip any questions or refrain from filling it out.

Compare and contrast Part A and Part B of the exhibition – displaying 2 different styles of curating/exhibition design:

1. Did you notice the differences in curatorial strategies between Part A and Part B? This could include didactic labels, anything affecting the atmosphere of the space, the way the audience views the art etc.  
 Yes  
 No
2. Did you find yourself spending more time in part A or part B of the exhibit?  
 Part A  
 Part B
3. Which did you prefer?  
 Part A  
 Part B
4. Were there artworks that resonated with you more than others?  
 Yes  
 No
5. Do you feel this was impacted by the way it was displayed?  
 Yes  
 No
6. Do you think the way the art was displayed impacted your interaction with the art?  
 Yes  
 No

Any other comments regarding the exhibit and the two different curatorial strategies used:

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## APPENDIX G: SURVEY RESULTS

A total of 57 optional surveys were completed anonymously. These are the results from the prescribed questions.



Question:	Answer 1:	Answer 2:	Other:
1. Did you notice the differences in curatorial strategies between Part A and Part B?	Yes: 45 <b>79%</b>	No: 12 <b>21%</b>	"part B seemed less cohesive (because of bar space/decoration"
2. Did you find yourself spending more time in part A or part B of the exhibit?	Part A: 29 <b>51%</b>	Part B: 25 Other: 1 (both) 2 N/A <b>44%</b>	"approx.. Equal time" "seemed like more work in front of gallery" "spent more time in Part B (liked the casual vibe). It was a more comfortable setting to appreciate the art" "part A – more art, cleaner space, but if I stayed longer, I would probably stay more in B, for the social set-up and food at the opening" "kind of both – bar created an atmosphere conducive of conversation, wished there was a bench in part A" "not sure where one ended/began"
3. Which did you prefer?	Part A: 33 <b>58%</b>	Part B: 19 Other: 5 (including 2 N/A) <b>33%</b>	"appreciated the more casual environment" "part A for the art, part B for the atmosphere" "both" "preferred the openness and freedom to roam – less people in part A"

4. Were there artworks that resonated with you more than others?	Yes: 53  <b>93%</b>	No: 2, Other: 1 N/A, 1 All  <b>3%</b>	“the framed gatherings (Comp 6+7)” “in part A” “they are all stunning! I want to buy them”
5. Do you feel this was impacted by the way it was displayed?	Yes: 39  <b>68%</b>	No: 16 Other: 2 N/A  <b>28%</b>	“milk glass offered serious value” “even though the artwork was framed, the casual setting eased any pressure to “get” or “see” the art. I was better able to just appreciate it” “I loved the mix of materials in part A – the totem, the scrunched blinds, the “mesh”” “also previous exposure to the work”
6. Do you think the way the art was displayed impacted your interaction with the art?	Yes: 50  <b>88%</b>	No: 7  <b>12%</b>	“The unframed art and paper clips made it more “accessible””
Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “open space made it easier to identify which/how many pieces there are. Part B made it a fun adventure to look for the pieces (not difficult to locate though). Overall the exhibit was beautiful &amp; the art was well displayed”</li> <li>- “difficulties creating relationship with the art in Part B because there were so many people, and thoughts/vision would get interrupted. Open space good to move around. Liked the loud art/smaller paintings around Part B”</li> <li>- “I think the work itself was more important than its method of display. Great work! Loved it!</li> <li>- “amazing exhibition. I love it. so much.”</li> <li>- “not for me”</li> <li>- “I felt there was no difference to each side”</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Part A had more space to view the art while Part B felt crowded and it was more difficult to spend time with each image. Part B was more 'fun' and relaxed, while part A felt like a typical gallery"</li> <li>- "I like the close placement of the small framed works. Cool way of hanging cloth pieces with paper clips. Seating is key. Also music – big effect on atmosphere"</li> <li>- "I found part B to be a more relaxing and inviting area in general but I was more connected to the art in Part A. It caught me eyes more and I spent more time in Part A interpreting the pieces"</li> <li>- "I liked the descriptions, the light, the symmetry with the blinds. Loved the bright floral composition pieces!"</li> <li>- "It was great. Vibrant + Enticing</li> <li>- "Open space (Part A) worked really well with the mesh drawings, so definitely played to the strengths of the work!"</li> <li>- "great exhibit – loved the vinyl!"</li> <li>- "loved the artwork, loved the exhibit! Great vibe"</li> <li>- "having both parts separated really accentuated the fact that there were 2 curatorial strategies. There was a real sense of separation between both areas"</li> <li>- "Light! Length of the room → great space to walk and encourage movement"</li> <li>- "loved the concept of the two parts. Really liked the idea of a more comfortable space to sit and appreciate the art. Thanks, great show!"</li> <li>- "I loved where the purple piece was placed!"</li> <li>- "the art felt more decorative and secondary in Part B"</li> <li>- "I enjoyed the openness of the space in Part A; It allowed me to step back and experience the art from different perspectives and points of view. The traditional method of displaying art, in my opinion, increase the importance/value that the art represents versus the casual style of B. In part B the art feels as though it is in a friend's apartment and it blends into the background versus being the object of significance/primary subject in Part A"</li> <li>- "Part B worked well with the size of the art and space available"</li> <li>- "I felt better in Part A – more space, big and diverse art pieces. However, I only stayed for a short time I think I would have loitered in Part B if I was here for longer. Part B could use more art and a less cluttered bar space. Seating in Part A would have been nice – somewhere to settle and enjoy the art. Overall a great show!"</li> <li>- Part A – Loved the ripple effect as you entered the building – the grey hangings. Part B – the set of 8 squiggly colourful small pieces were attractively hung. A+ B – Colourful prints made the balanced effect between A and B. Super Exhibition!!" _survey #11</li> </ul>	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “formal setting in A makes me appreciate the seriousness in the art. Relaxed setting is more comfortable to be in and spend time in but may also affect the importance (?) of the art experience”</li> <li>- “I feel like the setting of the bar was slightly overpowering – this may be due to the lack of experience with gallery settings”</li> <li>- “The thought and research put into the final execution was evident and highly effective. It allowed me to go on a diverse journey with the artist”</li> <li>- “congrats! Separate studio “parts” were still cohesive so the flow was undeniable”</li> <li>- “I really like the small ones and how they were set up. Reminded me much of my own style. Also I liked getting close up trying to figure out the mediums used”</li> <li>- “very much appreciated the accessible atmosphere created in Part B”</li> <li>- “you can see the hard working hours put into the wooden art structures. Also Part A was nice and bright and open. Good` use of texture too!”</li> <li>- “part B felt cozier and more intimate, Part A loft like and modern”</li> <li>- “Part A space was very bright and welcoming to browse, very good spacing of the pieces and selection of pieces to be hung beside each other”</li> <li>- “the exhibit looks fantastic. There is a clear separation between Parts A and B, but at the same time they do feel like part of a cohesive whole. In Part A, the space between the pieces and the lighting combine to highlight each piece’s individuality. In Part B, the integration of the pieces into the space and the warmer lighting combine to make the whole space feel like a singular piece. In this way, the experience of moving through the gallery resonates with the themes of labour/production inherent in the artwork itself – Part A being the “raw materials” that highlight the labour of both artist and spectator; part B being the “completed product” “</li> <li>- “the warm cozy lighting in Part B made me feel more welcome to study and enjoy the work, the “white cube” of Part A felt impersonal, more intimidating and dislocated. Even though A had more wall text, the atmosphere still felt more strict and authoritarian. Part B was just more comfortable and relaxing.”</li> <li>- “Part B – loved the set of 8, Part A – matching grey hangings were stunning, matching with canvases separated by one between them was a good effect”</li> </ul>	
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## APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT

### Introductory steps

1. Introduction of moderator
2. Thank everyone for attending
3. Ask if the participants would please complete the two question demographic sheet – optional – and place the completed forms in the centre of the table, face down
4. Explain the consent form, and the parameters of the form and then ask the attendees to complete the form (if they have not done so prior to the session) and include that this session will be recorded
5. Explain that this is an informal session, just to gather some opinions and feelings that people have about the exhibit, however explain that everyone's opinion is valued equally and it would be helpful if all the attendees respect the opinion of all members of the focus group. If any member of the group becomes disruptive, or inappropriate they will be asked to leave
6. Ask the members to go around the table and introduce themselves – first names only, if they prefer they can use an alias – names are needed to encourage and direct discussion only and not to identify anyone
7. ( it might be helpful to have folded cards that each member can place in front of them so that their names are displayed...these can be completed by each member)

### Initial Discussion

7. What was your general impression or reactions to this exhibit?
  - a. What did you like
    - i. Even if you didn't like the content, did you like the setting, the presentation
  - b. What did you dislike
  - c. What seemed to take away/detract from the exhibit?

### Elements of the exhibition design discussion

1. Read part of curatorial statement

This MFA curatorial thesis exhibit investigates the effects of curatorial and exhibition design strategies on the ability to engage an audience. Displaying the work of Juanita Lee Garcia, *Atmospheres of Production* presents two distinct areas in order to determine if the visitor experience in these differentiated spaces varies.

Part a attempting to be a more traditional gallery space with common gallery conventions and part b being a more relaxed environment, but potentially less neutral

- a. Does the group agree or disagree with the measures taken to engage the audience?
  - b. Were these aims (highlighted in the curatorial statement) effective or ineffective in their execution?
2. Compare and contrast of part A and Part B of the exhibition – displaying 2 different styles of curating/exhibition design
  - a. Did you notice the differences in curatorial strategies between Part A and Part B? This could include didactic labels, anything affecting the atmosphere of the space, the way the audience views the art etc, LABELS, LIGHTING
  - b. Did you find yourself spending more time in part A or part B of the exhibit?
  - c. How did one area versus the other make you feel?
  - d. Were there artworks that resonated with you more than others?
  - e. Do you feel this was impacted by the way it was displayed?
3. Do you think the way the art was displayed impacted your interaction with the art? Why?

### Final Discussion

1. Before we finish, is there anything else you would like to contribute to the discussion ...and go around the table
2. Thank everyone for attending

## APPENDIX I: DEMOGRAPHICS FORM

Providing the answers to the following two questions would be helpful to determine some demographic features of the members of this focus group.  
However, completing this form is entirely **optional**, and participation in completing this form will not impact your contribution to the focus group.

Which of the following age groups do you belong? (please check one)

- 18 – 29
- 30 – 45
- 46 - 60
- over 60

In which of the following groups would you place yourself in terms of your art knowledge?  
(Please check one)

- almost no exposure to art galleries and art exhibits
- some visits to art galleries and art exhibits but no formal education
- extensive experience visiting galleries and exhibits, but no formal education in art
- current or past art student
- current or former gallery worker, curator etc....

## APPENDIX J: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Date: **January 9, 2017**  
Project Title: **Measuring Elements of Exhibition Design**

**Jana Macalik**  
**Associate Dean, Faculty of Design**  
OCAD University  
**jmacalik@ocadu.ca**

**Maggie Lever**  
**Graduate Student, Criticism and Curatorial Practices**  
OCAD University  
**maggie.OCADU@gmail.com**

#### *INVITATION*

My name is Maggie Lever. I am a graduate student at OCAD University, working with my faculty supervisor Jana Macalik, Associate Dean, Faculty of Design. You are invited to participate in a study that involves focus group and survey research. The purpose of this study is determine the impact of specific curatorial and exhibition design strategies on the overall engagement of audience members. This is a single site study.

#### *WHAT'S INVOLVED*

As a participant, you will be asked to attend ONE of three focus group sessions in the exhibit space and discuss with the group (of approximately 10 to 12 persons) your impressions of specific components of the exhibition.

Participation will take approximately 1 hour of your time.

OR

You are invited to fill out an anonymous survey.

#### *POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS*

Possible benefits of participation include the opportunity to provide active feedback about a specific exhibition that may interest the attendee. The opportunity to discuss art and exhibition practices with new individuals may offer participants a new insight that will positively effect the way they interpret art exhibits in the future. Research has been done that suggests that participating in focus groups can be educational and informative. Participating in this open discussion with other people at the focus group could cause participants to think and form opinions on new topics that might give them greater insight into art display and curatorial practices. It is hoped that the research will help me and potentially other curators use curatorial and design strategies to make more informed decisions to engage their audience.

There also may be risks associated with participation. Members of the focus group are encouraged to share their thoughts and opinions with the group and while all participants will be reminded to be respectful of each other, members of the focus group are volunteers and not vetted. Should a participant make other volunteers feel embarrassed or uncomfortable, or show any disruptive or aggressive behaviour they will be asked to leave.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Your name will remain confidential. You will give a name at the focus group for the purposes of directing conversation, yet you are welcome to provide an alias. The focus group discussion will be recorded and the recording will be transcribed by the the co-investigator. The data from the focus group will be presented as aggregate data, with the exception of direct quotes. In the case of direct quotes, the names of the individuals will be changed so that their identity remains private. The transcribed recording will not be circulated, and will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the home of the investigator for the period of one year after which time it will be destroyed. Access to this data will be restricted to the principal investigator Jana Macalik and co-investigator Maggie Lever.

Please indicate consent to audiotaping at the end of the form.

All information you provide will be considered confidential and grouped with responses from other participants. Given the format of this session, we ask you to respect your fellow participants by keeping all information that identifies or could potentially identify a participant and/or his/her comments confidential.

Should you wish to complete the survey your identity shall remain anonymous.

*VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION*

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time, or to request withdrawal of your data (prior to data analysis on March 10<sup>th</sup>) and you may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

Should you wish to complete the survey, your participation is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw your consent at any time up until the survey is dropped into the closed box. At this time since the information is anonymous it can not be withdrawn as your particular survey can not be identified.

*PUBLICATION OF RESULTS*

Results of this study may be published in a graduate student thesis. In any publication, data will be presented in aggregate forms. Quotations from interviews or surveys will not be attributed to you without your permission.

Feedback about this study will be available in the form of the final summary is available upon request by the participant.

Please indicate consent at the bottom of the form.

*CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE*

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the Principal Investigator Jana Macalik or the co-investigator Maggie Lever using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at OCAD University file number 1641]. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the Research Ethics Office through cpineda@ocadu.ca.

*CONSENT FORM*

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Please note that by submitting this consent form you are providing consent for your participation. By consenting to participate you are not waiving any of your legal rights as a research participant.

Yes, I wish to be attributed for my contribution to this research study. You may use my name alongside statements and/or quotations that you have collected from me. In which case your name should be identified with the information you provide.

Yes, I give my consent to be audiotaped during the course of the focus group. I understand that this recording will be used for the purposes of collecting quotations and will be destroyed after one year's time. This recording will be kept locked and confidential.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records. RSVP to one of the three focus group sessions to [maggie.OCADU@gmail.com](mailto:maggie.OCADU@gmail.com) and attach this consent form



## APPENDIX K: FOCUS GROUP MEMBER DEMOGRAPHICS

