I. Abstract

*Curating Museum Exhibitions in the Jesuit Tradition of Teaching and Learning*

On February 3, 2017 the Loyola University Museum of Art (LUMA) will open the exhibit, “Wayang: The Art of Indonesian Puppetry”. This exhibit will be curated by undergraduate students working under the direction of Dr. Catherine Nichols, and feature objects from Loyola’s May Weber Ethnographic Study Collection. The curatorial process will be grounded in exhibit development models drawn from anthropology and museum studies. This project seeks to apply the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP) to the curatorial process in an effort to advance a new model of exhibit development. Organized by the five elements of the IPP, this project will experiment with and evaluate how an IPP-based exhibit development model can produce museum experiences that uphold the Jesuit values of action-oriented social justice. As a faculty member in the Department of Anthropology, Nichols practices anthropology in the museum through collections-based research and curation. This project presents a unique opportunity to merge the IPP with curatorial practice, and will contribute to developing Nichols’s curatorial expertise. As university museums involve students and faculty in their curatorial efforts, this research will provide a framework for student involvement and outcomes oriented toward social justice. This exhibit development model will disseminate the Jesuit approach to teaching and learning to the broader museum field, and will be especially useful for university museums and museum studies programs at Jesuit universities.
II. Technical Description of Project

*Curating Museum Exhibitions in the Jesuit Tradition of Teaching and Learning*

Curating exhibitions of cultural and indigenous arts by museums has undergone significant shifts that align with increasing professionalism and critiques of anthropology. Museums now spend considerable resources crafting both visitor-centered experiences, and consulting with scholars and community knowledge experts to produce engaging, accurate, and ethical exhibitions. As scholar-practitioners, museum anthropologists have pioneered the development of new exhibit development and interpretive models informed by theories of representation (Lidchi 1997), performance (Isaac, Bojorquez and Nichols 2012), and collaboration (Phillips 2003). Museum educators employ different learning theories such as constructivist approaches (Hein 1992) and experiential learning (Black 2005) when designing exhibit spaces, labels, and interactives.

Jesuit educators have long made use of visual representations and art in their teaching (Potteman 2000). As informal education institutions, museums are also sites of visual, object-based, and experiential pedagogies (Hooper-Greenhill 2006). Recently, a faculty and student team at College of the Holy Cross mounted an exhibition on Balinese textiles where curatorial decisions were made with respect to Ignatian art-based teaching (Rodgers and Cumella 2012). Exhibit curation develops through innovative research and new interpretive approaches, and constitutes a fertile arena of anthropological practice to explore the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm (IPP).

This project seeks to apply the IPP to the curation of an upcoming exhibition of Indonesian *wayang* (puppets) to open at the Loyola University Museum of Art (LUMA) in Spring 2017. Curation involves the development of exhibit content, including object selection,
research, and interpretive texts. It includes the design of physical space, educational elements and programming, and formative and summative evaluation of exhibit goals. “Wayang: The Art of Indonesian Puppetry” is being curated by anthropology majors or minors enrolled in ANTH 396: Internship in Museum Studies, supervised by Nichols. Approximately ten students per semester (Fall 2016 & Spring 2017) complete this course, which is taught using the May Weber Ethnographic Study Collection. We ground our efforts in current scholarly and professional approaches to curation (Porto 2007). The FCIP research grant will be used to develop a model of curation in the Jesuit tradition by studying the application of the IPP to the development of a cultural art exhibit.

Curation acknowledges multiple stakeholders. In the past, the authority and expertise of the curator – typically a subject matter expert with academic training – has been assumed. However, decolonizing methodologies (Lonetree 2012) have sought to position curators as facilitators and elevate traditional or community knowledge holders in order to address legacies of exclusion. Reflection upon and subsequent reorientation of the curator’s role is increasingly important in cultural institutions. Museum professionals also seriously consider the background and desires of visitors, which factors into how objects and knowledge are presented (McLean 1993). Accordingly, this project will consider two groups in its application of the IPP: the student curators and exhibit visitors.

The operationalization of the research question will be guided by the five elements of the IPP: context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation, as described in Korth (2008). We will explore constellations of these elements for each group (curators and visitors), which will produce complementary data sets. These data will be gathered using the ethnographic tradition of participant-observation (Bernard 2006) and reflexivity (Scholte 1999), and evaluation techniques
drawn from the museum field (Diamond 2007). Each element of the IPP will receive intentional consideration in the curatorial process, as we seek to understand how this exhibit influences the personal and intellectual development of its curators, and how an object-based experience with interpretive emphasis on action affects visitors.

Methodology for Student Curators (students enrolled in ANTH 396: Museum Studies during Fall 2016 and Spring 2017, taught by Nichols)

- **Context:** Student curators will discuss what they bring to the exhibit development process. They will experiment with techniques to address issues of authorship and authority in the exhibit space by experimenting with ways of introducing themselves to visitors. This could be through a text panel or introductory video.

- **Experience:** In groups, curators will navigate designated descriptive and theoretical resources on Indonesian wayang to expand their content-area knowledge. The groups will collaborate on interpretive exhibit elements and generate supplementary resources to be used in the exhibit.

- **Reflection:** Curators will write a series of reflexive essays as they move through the curatorial process. These essays will focus on: group work dynamics, object-based learning, challenges of interpretation, curatorial/representational authority.

- **Action:** Curators will research an appropriate framework for emboldening action by student visitors and through their own efforts. The design of these projects will be completed by fall student curators and facilitated by spring student curators. Possible frameworks could include: organizing a day of service to the local Indonesian community, or raising awareness of cultural arts or preservation organizations.
• Evaluation: Student curators will conduct a self-assessment of their work each semester. This will take narrative format and consider how Loyola’s Jesuit identity and mission were articulated in the process of exhibit curation. This will fulfill the Center for Experiential Learning’s reflection requirement for Engaged Learning courses.

Methodology for Visitors (students enrolled in ANTH 100 and ANTH 361, taught by Nichols)

LUMA’s visitors include the LUC community, LUMA members, and the general public. Under the direction of Curator of Education Dr. Natasha Ritsma, LUMA is actively seeking to increase the number of student visitors through programming and curricular-specific instruction. Visitor studies will be limited to LUC students.

• Context: What do LUMA’s student visitors bring to this exhibit? Nichols will administer a formative evaluation to 68 undergraduates on their prior museum experience. Respondents are students currently enrolled in Nichols’s ANTH 100 courses (Fall 2016). All have visited LUMA (a class requirement). The survey will serve as an example of an anthropological research method, and provide visitor background. Questions are designed to help curators understand student visitors’ prior experience and attitudes toward museums as they relate to the IPP, and may include:

1. What are your most memorable museum experiences? Why were they memorable?
2. Has a museum experience ever inspired you to take action? Describe it.
3. Have you found museums to be places that encourage reflection or contemplation?

• Experience: In informal educational institutions, visitors chose what they learn. Curators will use free-choice learning modalities in the exhibit layout, and select informative
materials at different levels (short labels, popular articles, scholarly articles) to satisfy the desires of visitors.

- Reflection: Reflective spaces or comment books allow visitors to express feelings the exhibit produces. Based on formative evaluation responses, curators will intentionally consider how to integrate reflection in both the exhibit space and programming. Thinking or writing prompts may ask visitors to connect their experience to information or perspectives encountered in their courses.

- Action: Mission-based organizations, such as museums, often seek to inspire action. Students enrolled in ANTH 361: Anthropology & Museums will be required to visit the exhibit and undertake an action-oriented project for course credit.

- Evaluation: What has been the impact of the exhibit and programming for LUMA’s student visitors? Museums use visitor surveys and observations as summative evaluation to assess how well an exhibit achieved its goals. Students in ANTH 100 and ANTH 361 will visit the exhibit and complete summative evaluations that examine how the elements of the IPP enhanced or changed how each person experienced the exhibit. Questions will focus on exhibit techniques informed by the IPP, and may include:

  1. Were there any elements or techniques that you hadn’t experienced in a museum before?
  2. What connections between courses or LUC experiences, and this exhibit can you draw?

### Overview of Data Collection from Student Visitors (all students taught by Nichols)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Nature of Respondents</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formative Evaluation</td>
<td>Students in two sections of ANTH 100</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summative Evaluation</td>
<td>Students in ANTH 100 (1 section)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Spring 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summative Evaluation</td>
<td>Students in ANTH 361 (1 section)</td>
<td>&gt;35</td>
<td>Spring 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

Textual data (student curator reflections and self-assessment) will be analyzed by Nichols. Text analysis (McKee 2003) will be used to code texts for overarching themes, based on each element of the IPP. Student curators in ANTH 396 will analyze student visitor data sets (above), which will be used in the development of the exhibit and evaluation of how well it achieved its goals.

Contributions to Institutional Identity

The development of an exhibit curation model based on the IPP will serve as an example for faculty and staff involved in the development of exhibitions at other Jesuit university museums, such as those at Boston College (McMullen Museum of Art) and Gonzaga University (Jundt Art Museum). The emphasis on the action element is particularly relevant for museums interested in decolonizing methodologies that seek to address social justice issues such as respect for human dignity. Results of this research will be useful for museum training programs, particularly at Jesuit institutions such as Georgetown University.

IRB Approval

LUC students enrolled in ANTH 100, ANTH 361, and ANTH 396 will serve as respondents for this study. As this research involves human subjects, it is subject to IRB review. As there is low risk to respondents, it should be able to proceed as an expedited project.
Qualifications of Researcher

Nichols has been working in museums in a professional capacity since 2005. She was trained as a curator and worked for six years in various curatorial capacities at Arizona State University. She worked closely with student assistants and interns, and was a teaching assistant for students in the graduate program. She is experienced with all aspects of curation, exhibit design, and public programming. She is currently supervising an undergraduate Provost Fellowship that uses visitor surveys at the Field Museum.

Throughout her tenure at Loyola Nichols has been interested in and involved with Ignatian Pedagogy. During 2014-15 she attended monthly IPP lunch events to learn from colleagues and began to develop assignments rooted in IPP. She participated in a roundtable lunch and learn discussion on my experience during Fall 2015. During 2015-16 she completed the IP Certificate program; her final project included an IPP-oriented redesign of all assignments for ANTH 100. With each passing semester she becomes more comfortable with the IPP and uses it extensively in her ANTH 100 course. This research project seeks to strengthen the application of the IPP in her work with the May Weber Collection and ANTH 396, an engaged learning course.

References


III. Statement of Individual, Programmatic, and Institutional Impact

Relation to Previous and Future Work

This project seeks to apply the IPP to the curation of cultural art exhibitions. As a museum professional, I have been involved in curatorial activities for seventeen exhibitions of ethnographic and fine art. My curatorial practice is informed by anthropological theories of representation, performance, collaboration, and material agency. As I become increasingly familiar with the IPP, I propose to use its elements and social justice orientation to advance exhibition practice. Museum-oriented ethnographic and survey research, in which I have prior experience, is necessary to demonstrate the strengths of the IPP in the curatorial process.

As director of LUC’s May Weber Ethnographic Study Collection, I currently work with students and colleagues to make the collection accessible to broad audiences. One means of achieving access is through museum exhibitions. The upcoming LUMA exhibit, “Wayang: The Art of Indonesian Puppetry” is the first extended exhibition of the collection since its receipt by the university, and will run from February 4 through June 3, 2017. This research will be useful for exhibit development models for by faculty and students, and museum professionals, particularly at Jesuit university museums.

Future Support

As director of the May Weber Collection, I am the faculty member in charge of all collection-related activities. This exhibit promises to be a successful partnership with LUMA, an accredited museum. Grants by organizations such as the Illinois Humanities and Illinois Arts Council are available to support exhibitions at public museums. This existing partnership with
LUMA, using a model of curatorial practice informed by the IPP, will allow me to generate extramural funds to support future exhibitions of the Weber Collection.

**Institutional Impact**

As a faculty member who has applied the IPP in my ANTH 100 (Tier 1 core course), this project will allow me to experiment with and evaluate the IPP in my ANTH 396 course, which I teach every semester in conjunction with the Weber Collection. Though the design of this project capitalizes on the strengths and contributions of LUC students, it constitutes another layer of preparation, coordination, data collection and analysis, and preparation of a manuscript. Funds would also offset the costs of presenting the results of this research at the American Alliance of Museums or Association of Academic Museums and Galleries conference.
IV. Timeline and Dissemination Plan

Following IRB approval of the project, data will be gathered throughout the fall and spring semesters of 2016-2017. The exhibit opens February 3, 2017 and action-oriented student projects will be completed by April 2017. Data analysis will proceed iteratively as formative and summative evaluations (surveys) are completed, and student reflections are submitted. I plan to prepare a scholarly article to be submitted to *Exhibition*, the journal of the National Association for Museum Exhibition. This is an appropriate venue, as the journal publishes on exhibition theory and practice. This article will be submitted in May 2017. Based on the outcome of the research, I plan to submit a paper proposal to the American Alliance of Museums conference or Association of Academic Museums and Galleries meeting (held in conjunction with AAM conference). Due to the extensive lead time needed for session consideration (for example, proposals are due Sept 2, 2016 for May 7, 2017 conference), I plan to submit the proposal for the 2018 conference. In an effort to reach a more local audience, I will work with Dr. Kyle Roberts (Assistant Professor in Public History) to present finding to graduate students enrolled in Loyola’s Public History program.