Chapter 9

Through the Lens of the Museum Curator: Teaching Compositional and Digital Literacies to Curate a Folio of Process and Product in Art Education

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ABSTRACT

Traditional Portfolios have a long history in the art world. The iconic and romantic image of an artist with their portfolio tucked under their arm is an image ever present in our minds when we see the term portfolio. Each portfolio that an artist presents to an audience has a different story to tell in their selection, collection and curation of artifacts and the narrative that they explore. Developing the necessary folio thinking (Chen & Black, 2010) skills as art students is an important learning outcome. Many students do not see the relevance of documenting their practice, experimentation or process as combined experiences. Changing and adapting to teach contemporary folio thinking skills, The author proposes that looking and learning from the artworld and role of museum curator to scaffold approaches to learning curation in a digital portfolio rather than asking students to reflect on their own can support identity formation and develop self efficacy skills.

INTRODUCTION

I am a visual arts teacher, with a Bachelor degree in Art Education from the University of New South Wales, College of Fine Arts, Australia. I graduated in the early nineties, and taught a Post Modern and Humanist visual arts education in New South Wales (NSW) that valued that varying “positions may be taken about relationships among persons, art, and education and many of these positions are likely to be in conflict.” These values included the belief that art works “are constructed out of social interactions and indeed are designated ‘art works’ by those elements in society that sponsor them” (Macgregor, 1992, NPN). Visual arts education in NSW prior to the development of the Australian

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Curriculum for the Arts was based on the premise of authentic pedagogical theories of teaching and learning that endeavored to teach students to investigate the world of the artist and artwork through perspectives that act as lenses for investigation. The subjective, cultural, structural, and postmodern frames allowed students to examine the practice of the artist based on discipline-based art education (DBAE) domains. These frames or domains allowed the learner to investigate the social, cultural, economic, and political influences and how an audience plays a distinctive role in an artist’s practice.

This pedagogical approach expected students to engage in learning through both art making, art criticism, and art history. Approaches to teaching the content differed from school to school, however, the curriculum required the teaching of core hours and standardized assessable components that based itself in school based assessment and external exams in the Higher School Certificate (HSC). As an artist, researcher, and teacher this lens of learning is an important one to make clear up front as it continues to guide and direct my scholarship of teaching, learning, and practice and is evident in my current approach to teaching and learning in art education and the following chapter.

As an artist, researcher, teacher, and traveler, museums and galleries have always played an important role in my world of family, work, and adventures. I experience the museum as a spiritual or what others may equate to a religious experience. I have experienced this from an early age traveling as a child with passionate art devoted parents and these experiences led to an adoration of art, museums and sites of history. The somatic experience in an art museum for me, is an emotional response (Joy & Sherry, 2003) as the art work is revealed in its full; from the concept, idea, meaning and media selected by the artist, to the framing devices, the wall text, the size of the room. My Experience is shaped by the curatorial decisions that are made for me, including the flow of the room, the feel of the space, the narrative constructed in the space, all help to shape my experience.

Museums are special places as they incorporate all of the world’s shared and collective knowledge, cultures and societies of generations past. As an arts educator and educator in museums, these experiences have played a role in my whole life. The story behind this chapter is instigated by a love of museums and digital technologies and a continued wonder at why in the visual arts we do not assume and claim the language in our discipline and make more explicit what it is that artists do for our students. Museums as the curated holders of our cultural knowledge attempt to make this explicit, we can learn from each other to inform how to integrate digital learning and artifacts as a pedagogy to support our students in learning how to present skills, recognize and demonstrate their practice, experiences and knowledge in secondary art education.

This chapter presents a discipline based art education framework to scaffold and model curatorial, compositional, and digital skills for visual art students as they learn to present and reflect on their art production, art criticism, art history and aesthetics in a digital space and,

- Explores notions of museum culture and language that pervade our classrooms
- How digital portfolios can enhance and encourage reflection of practice
- How portfolios can support practice in art education
- Offers two teaching and learning ideas to provide opportunities for secondary art educators to invite museum culture and language into their daily teaching through digital portfolios as learning spaces.

As an artist, researcher, and teacher, I can see that there is an opportunity to use the wonderful and enriching language of the arts to guide and teach our students, look through and learn from the museum and the curatorial world of collec-