UNDERSTANDING BLACK FEMINIST THEORY AND THE REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN’S ART IN MUSEUMS: ENGAGING BLACK WOMEN IN CRITICAL DIALOGUE

By

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ABSTRACT

This applied project, *Understanding Black Feminist Theory and the Representation of African American Women’s Art in Museums: Engaging in Critical Dialogue*, investigates how exposure to critical theories like Black feminist theory can inform a critical pedagogical experience about the representation of African American women’s art in museums. In regard to art and museum education, black women can address their marginalization to articulate their experiences through art-making and hosting an exhibition. This report serves as evidence of a project that allowed a group of black women to explore Black feminist theory and African American women’s art in museums in order to create an exhibition about that exploration.
DEDICATION

The project was a collaborative effort from the beginning. While I may have constructed and facilitated the space where this project existed, I could not have done it without the advice, input, and words of encouragement of those closest to me and those that I met during this process. This project is for my family, my friends, my participants, the Black women in my life, and every Black girl and woman everywhere.
I want to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Christina Hanawalt, Dr. Lynn Sanders-Bustle, Dr. Carissa DiCindio, and Dr. Shawnya Harris for their encouragement and guidance during the course of my time at the University of Georgia as well as during the application of this project. Thank you to the Black women scholars, Dr. Mora Beauchamp-Byrd, Dr. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Dr. Nichole Ray, and Makeba Dixon-Hill, for speaking with me and providing suggestions as I worked on this project. Thank you to Dr. Katie Geha and Erin Riggins for helping us to pull off an amazing exhibition at the Dodd Galleries. Thank you to my family, especially my grandmother, and friends, who gave me advice, answered my questions, and inquired about the progress of this project. Last, but not least, a special thank you to all of the women in my personal and professional life. You inspired me to contemplate our experiences in relation to art education. This was not just my project; it was for all of us.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Growing up in a military family, relocating was a part of my life. Living in different communities, we became frequent museum visitors and I developed a love of art early in my childhood. My family was very supportive and instilled in me the importance of the arts. As a young black child, I was fortunate to have parents who took advantage of opportunities to expose me to art by African American artists. My family’s guidance led me to learn about art and artists that were not regularly discussed in my classrooms.

Although I grew up as a frequent museum visitor and art lover, I did not begin to think critically about my museum experiences until graduate school. I was in love with museum spaces, but longed to see myself reflected more in those spaces. I saw artwork that was not visually reflecting me, my thoughts, experiences, or desires. Moreover, I did not see much work by artists that belonged to my racial and gendered group. I soon realized that even in my own arts education, I could not remember learning much about African American art or art history until this point in time. Furthermore, in discussions with family, friends, and peers, I realized that the lack of representation of African American women artists in museums was recognizable to more than just myself.

As a graduate student, I began to spend more and more time in museums as a curatorial and educational intern at The Columbus Museum and later at the Georgia Museum of Art. At The Columbus Museum, some African American artists were represented, but very few African American women. I was inspired by those that were featured, but I longed to see more. At the Georgia Museum of Art, while working with Dr. Shawnya Harris, the Larry D. and Brenda A. Thompson Curator of African American and African Diasporic Art, I realized how empowering
and fulfilling it was to learn about and see artwork by African American artists. Finally, I was learning and engaging with art and artists that I could identify and connect with on a level that I had not previously experienced.

In my personal life, I began carving out a space where I wanted to connect more to my experiences as a black woman. I wanted to understand these experiences in a new way as I bridged the gap of my previous experiences to my learning and research in art education. Upon investigating ways to better understand and critically examine the experiences of African American women, I came upon Black feminist theory and realized its relevance to my intended research. While working on my applied project, I used my position as a future art/museum educator to connect Black feminist theory to African American women artists and museums. I found a way to explore these topics to create a better understanding of their intersections, and relayed the resulting content to a group of black women.

**Background of the Problem**

African American women’s art is often misunderstood and underrepresented within museums and education. African American women artists face significant challenges when it comes to gaining and maintaining representation in cultural institutions such as museums (Bobo, 2001). They also face misguided questions and criticism about their experiences and artistic subject matter. Viewers and critics may assume that art by women primarily tackles issues around femininity and gender equality while art by African Americans addresses racial

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1 The project focused on African American women’s art because that artists’ works that the group viewed during the museum visits came from women born and/or living in the United States. The participants were identified as black to recognize that African American women’s particular racial and ethnic backgrounds vary because of the African diaspora.
experiences and social injustices. hooks (1995) states, “I found that even those black women artists whose work is widely acclaimed and receives attention on a number of fronts, both within the mainstream art world and outside, rarely receive serious consideration” (p. xv). The artwork and narratives created by African American women are overlooked as they fall between these two groups and as they represent a double marginalization, being both African American and female.

A theory that attempts to address and articulate the intricate connections of racism, sexism, and other -isms in the lives and experiences of women of the African diaspora is Black feminist theory. This theory consciously addresses the challenges within African American female experiences while allowing African American women the space to contemplate their own experiences.

**Statement of Purpose**

When trying to understand artworks created by African American women, there needs to be consideration of how these works are represented in museum spaces and how we understand ideas, thoughts, and experiences of African American women. In order to better understand African American women’s art in museum settings, this applied project explored how exposure to Black feminist theory, African American women’s artwork, and museum educational practice could affect a group of black women’s understanding of African American women’s artistic representation and output.

This applied project included several components. The group of black women who participated in this study learned about Black feminist theory, African American women artists, and museum education practices. The participants examined and reflected on the artwork of African American women artists as visitors in museum settings. While I facilitated art museum
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experiences, art and writing activities, readings, and discussions, the group of black women explored Black feminist theory, which allowed them to bring their unique racial and gendered experiences to creating their own artwork. The participants utilized their interpretation of the artwork they had viewed along with elements from Black feminist literature to inform their art making. They learned about Black feminist theory, African American women’s art history, and some aspects of contemporary museum practice and theory to fuel their artistic reflection for their own exhibition in a museum-like space.

With the use and implementation of Black feminist theory, critical pedagogy, and contemporary museum practice and theory, the group created a body of artwork that reflected a move toward better understanding and increased representation of African American women’s art. Through the exhibition of artwork, the group had a chance to question and challenge the impact that Black feminist theory and African American women’s art can have in cultural spaces like museums. Moreover, the aim of the exhibition of artwork was to educate visitors about Black feminist theory through the eyes and artistic endeavors of the participants. By curating this work in the gallery space, I promoted the importance of representing African American women’s artwork in museums. The completion of the project reflected the need for exposure of marginalized and underrepresented groups in museums and how this exposure occurred through the understanding of critical social theories and art education.

Research Questions

I had three major questions that I wanted to answer through the application of this project:
What happens when black women look critically at Black feminist theory, African American women’s art and their representation in museums, and educational and curatorial practices?

As an art and museum educator, what happens when Black feminist theory and contemporary museum practice and theory are used to inform a critical pedagogical experience of black women in art museums?

What happens when gallery visitors have the opportunity to respond to artwork and an exhibition created and curated by black women who are reflecting on theory (Black feminist theory, contemporary museum practice and theory, and critical pedagogy) and exposure to museums and African American women’s artworks?

**Significance of the Study**

I believe that this work is significant for the field of art education as it explores the narratives, experiences, and artistic reflection of African American women as a marginalized group. It is important for art education to include and explore the complexity of artistic endeavors, representations, and life experiences of African American women as subject matter. This study addresses the need to acquaint people with the visual arts contributions of African American women through the use of Black feminist theory and the creation of an art exhibition. The study provides a space for the participants to partake in meaning-making and art-making to better understand both their own experiences and the artwork of the marginalized group to which they identify. The experiences of the participants in this study inform a critical examination of how African American women can represent themselves in museum spaces and educate visitors about their experiences.
In the context of this study, utilizing Black feminist theory, contemporary museum practice and theory, and critical pedagogy seemed appropriate. These three theories are inextricably linked in this study, but are separately significant in understanding the complexities of African American women’s art in museums and facilitating critical dialogue. Black feminist theory articulates how to understand and give voice to lived experiences of black women. Contemporary museum practice and theory aims to deconstruct traditional museum practices and politics, embrace and exhibit multiple perspectives, and give audiences control of their own artistic and cultural expressions. Critical pedagogy addresses the need to change educational practices through the recognition of diverse viewpoints, as well as the promotion of increased access and opportunities for marginalized groups. Altogether, Black feminist theory, contemporary museum practice and theory, and critical pedagogy recognize the importance and value of supporting diverse, underrepresented, and marginalized groups of people. These three theories emphasize the need to give marginalized groups of people a voice in how they are represented in the spaces they inhabit and how expressing these voices is educational for everyone. Therefore, dialogue is considered by all of these theories as a tool of empowerment.

**Black Feminist Theory**

In regard to dialogue, Black feminism advocates for listening to and learning about the experiences of black women and the politics that affect their voices. Scholars from the field of Black feminist theory emphasize critical dialogue and the importance of scholarship to bring the experiences of black women to the forefront. Gist (2016) states, “Reading life through the lens of black feminism offers the reader an analytical framework for interpreting the social
world….black feminism functions as a critical social theory that helps readers of the social world understand how black women can be marginalized through institutional structures and practices, social norms, and ideological elitism” (p. 245-246). The idea of “reading life” (Gist, 2016) allows black women to articulate their own experiences and find means of empowerment within the context of social, racial, and gendered injustices. As a means of empowerment, Black feminism enacted by black women has been a part of the history of the United States. In her historiographical article, Taylor (1998) declares, “the historical evolution of Black feminism in the United States not only developed out of Black women’s antagonistic and dialectical engagement with White women but also out of their need to ameliorate conditions for empowerment on their own terms” (p. 235). By exploring the racial and gendered experiences of black women in historical and contemporary contexts, black women scholars and writers show how personal experiences connect with theory to challenge and evaluate structures of domination. The work of Black feminist intellectuals like Patricia Hill Collins, Audre Lorde, bell hooks, and others have provided an array of perspectives within this strain of thought. But, Black feminist theory is not merely a collection of thoughts; it is a means for activism. Black feminism can be seen as a commitment to empowering black women while also extending its activism to create a humanistic community.

The push for empowerment for black women encourages them to connect to each other and heal the wounds of injustice. Black women have a history of engaging in formal and informal acts of resistance against injustice. One example of an act of resistance by black women is rejecting stereotypical representations of themselves. Collins (1990/2009) states, “Resisting by doing something that ‘is not expected’ could not have occurred without Black women’s long standing rejection of mammies, matriarchs, and other controlling images. When combined, these
individual acts of resistance suggest that a distinctive, collective Black women’s consciousness exists” (p. 108). Acts of resistance have been used to create community and support among black women. These acts of resistance create a space for black women to heal and share their experiences. hooks (1989) states, “Black women must identify ways feminist thought and practice can aid in our process of self-recovery and share that knowledge with our sisters” (p. 182). Experience is a form of knowledge that black women can share with each other and learn from to create change. Through Black feminist theory, black women can become empowered not only through consciousness changing in communities, but also by taking steps to transform social institutions and inequalities (Collins, 1990/2009). When black women are offered new knowledge about their own experiences and the power relations that underlie that knowledge, empowerment can result. And, when current knowledge is opened to questioning, Black women are enabled to define their realities “on [their] own terms” (Collins, 1990/2009, p. 292).

Through self-definition of their realities, black women’s experiences inform their knowledge. There is value in viewing one’s own experiences as a form of knowledge that can be shared with others. Black feminist epistemology taps into understanding how marginalized groups like black women create knowledge that fuels their own empowerment and supports social justice. hooks (1989) states, “Black women need to construct a model of feminist theorizing and scholarship that is inclusive, that widens our options, that enhances our understanding of black experience and gender” (p. 182). Within Black feminist theory, black women can find a space that prioritizes their knowledge, wisdom, and experience. Articulating a black feminist epistemology means that black women’s racial and gendered knowledge explores and acknowledges how black women understand and live their lives. Collins (1990/2009) states, “knowledge and wisdom….taps the first dimension of Black feminist epistemology. Living life
as a black woman requires wisdom because knowledge about the dynamics of intersecting oppressions has been essential to Black women’s survival” (Collins, 1990/2009, p. 275). Sharing one’s experiences and developing empathy is educational. This education consists of communication and common experience of reality (Collins, 1990/2009).

In Collins’ (1990/2009) text, she establishes defining features and themes of Black feminist theory and its workings as a critical social theory. She states, “Black women intellectuals have laid a vital analytical foundation for a distinctive standpoint on self, community, and society and, in doing so, created a multifaceted, African-American women’s intellectual tradition” (Collins, 1990/2009, p. 5). In this intellectual tradition, Collins notes that as a collective, black women’s oppression is linked to their activism through a dialectical relationship (Collins, 1990/2009). While the concepts of oppression and activism negate in terms of their definitions, their relationship within the scope of black women’s experiences is a lived reality. Black women experience oppression but are also fueled by it to perpetuate activism on their own behalf. Black women may experience this dialectical relationship in a variety of ways in their lives. Therefore, black women as a group cannot be characterized as having a single standpoint or experience. While some of their experiences and challenges may be similar, every black woman will not have had the same experiences. Collins (2009) states,

There is no essential or archetypal Black woman whose experiences stand as normal, normative, and thereby authentic. An essentialist understanding of a Black woman’s standpoint suppresses differences among black women in search of an elusive group unity. Instead, it may be more accurate to say that a Black women’s collective standpoint does exist, one characterized by the tensions that accrue to different responses to common challenges (p. 32).
Due to the fact that there is no homogeneous experience of black women, there is a need for self-definition and autonomy within black women’s collective standpoint. This collective standpoint can be viewed as a form of resistance to the oppression that black women face, which in turn fuels their activism.

When black women recognize their oppression, they can begin to work for their activism. Black women have had to promote and fight for their own interests. The Combahee River Collective, a Black feminist lesbian organization that was active in Boston from 1974 to 1980, (1977/1995) states, “We realize that the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation is us” (p. 234). In order to get the results they want, black women must work against injustices and inequalities that affect them. Therefore, Black feminist theory aims to give voice to black women who live in a society where they are not treated as if they matter (Sealey-Ruiz, 2007). For example, black women must constantly negotiate and reconcile their self-defined imagery with their objectification as outsiders (Collins, 1990/2009). These negotiations and reconciliations allow black women to voice themselves as free-thinking survivors. However, self-definition does not imply that black women are separating themselves from others. Rather, they are finding self-definition within connection to other people like family and communities. Collins (2009) declares,

the connectedness among individuals provides Black women deeper self-definitions. By insisting on self-definition, Black women question not only what has been said about African American women, but the credibility and the intentions of those possessing the power to define. When Black women define ourselves, we clearly reject the assumption that those in position granting them the authority to interpret our reality are entitled to do so (p. 125).
Within the private spaces of black women’s consciousness and formations of public safe spaces, black women create ideas and perform acts that allow them to cope with their lives and experiences while transcending their presupposed positions as “the Other” (Collins, 1990/2009).

Furthermore, Black feminist thought also considers the importance of dialogue, recognizes the effects of change, and contributes to social justice. While all black women might not recognize the significance of Black feminist theory, Collins (1990/2009) states, “One key task for Black women intellectuals of diverse ages, social classes, educational backgrounds, and occupations consists of asking the right questions and investigating all dimensions of a Black women’s standpoint with and for African-American women” (p. 37). In order to question and investigate the dimensions of a black women’s standpoint, there must be dialogue. Dialogue allows people to build necessary alliances and communities while also accepting each person’s definition and version of what is true in their lives. To create a space for this kind of dialogue, there must be a recognition that change is a factor in how we view social conditions and react to them with practices and knowledge (Collins, 1990/2009). With the recognition of dialogue and change, Black feminist thought is considered as more than a means of empowerment for black women. It is also a means for human empowerment (Collins, 1990/2009). A commitment to aiding all people is an important piece that holds the theory together.

Part of thinking about theory is that we are all engaged in some form of it in our daily lives. For instance, Black feminist theory prioritizes an understanding of the particularities of black women’s lives and actions. Therefore, Black feminist theory can be seen as a relevant tool for investigating issues concerning black women. Howard-Hamilton (2013) states, “Selecting the appropriate theories for understanding the needs of African American women should, however, be based on their culture, personal and social contexts, which clearly differ significantly from
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those of men and women who have not experienced racial and gender oppression” (p. 20).

Moreover, seeing Black feminist theory as a theory that is based on the various contexts that intersect black women’s lives reveals that black women are self-defined persons. For example, within this self-definition, Black feminist theory supports challenging controlling images of black women (Collins, 1990/2009). Portraying black women as stereotypical mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and other negative personas has justified black women’s oppression. Majority groups with the authority to define social values use their power to manipulate ideas about black identity and womanhood in society. Therefore, black women’s status as outsiders becomes the point from which other groups define their normality (Collins, 1990/2009). Thus, black women must carve out what their identity, womanhood and normality is for them.

Furthermore, as a means of self-definition, many black women scholars discuss their own experiences along with those of other black women when doing research. Collins (2009) declares, “Experience as a criterion of meaning with practical images as its symbolic vehicles is a fundamental tenet in African-American thought systems” (p. 276). However, this combination of knowledge and experience has never been considered the standard practice of research within our society. Thus, in research, black women’s experiences may be overlooked due to the lack of understanding as well as discrimination. Guy-Sheftall (1995) states, “black women have struggled against racism and sexism and many other ‘isms’ during our involuntary sojourn in this country and….these courageous efforts have been ignored, misinterpreted, or maligned” (p. xxv). As a part of black women’s efforts to combat racism and sexism, black women scholars work to engage black women’s narratives in their research about knowledge and education. This intellectual work about black women allows black scholars to determine questions that merit
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investigation, to find interpretive frameworks that can analyze the subsequent findings, and to
discern how this new knowledge can be utilized (Collins, 1990/2009). Therefore, emphasizing
the importance of knowledge and education in Black feminist theory is crucial for black women
to move forward. hooks (1984) states,

Encouraging women to strive for education, to develop their intellects, should be a
primary goal of feminist movement. Education as the ‘the practice of freedom’….will be
a reality for women only when we develop an educational methodology that addresses
the needs of all women. This is an important feminist agenda. (p. 116)

Moreover, Black feminist theory can be seen as an educational tool as we look for ways to
address the needs of black women.

Contemporary Museum Practice and Theory

While Black feminist theory addresses the experiences, concerns, and narratives of black
women, contemporary museum practice and theory addresses how those and other narratives of
diverse groups of people work within the context of museums. Some people might not realize
that the objects and artworks in a museum are more than just things. These items are a part of a
narrative that reflects societal constructs and hierarchies. Museums can affect our perceptions of
what is authentic, and are deemed trustworthy institutions that educate the public (Marstine,
2006). Museums represent cultural identity while also producing it through framing. Marstine
(2006) states, “Framing is a metaphorical process that creates a vision of the past and future
based on contemporary needs….Frames not only set boundaries, they provide an ideologically
based narrative context that colors our understanding of what’s included” (p. 4). Framing
controls how audiences view objects and the narratives around them. New museum theory aids
in decolonizing the current control of framing of cultural heritage by handing it over to those
who are represented to embrace the multiplicity of viewpoints. In handing over control, the museum shows a willingness to share power in decision-making. Marstine (2006) states, “Museums are a ‘social technology,’ an ‘invention’ that packages culture for our consumption; it’s our job to deconstruct this packaging so that we can become critical consumers and lobby for change” (p. 5). Changing the concept, work, and space of the museum from that of mere worship to critical dialogue is especially important to think about when exhibiting the works of people of color and women. When analyzing the narratives of museums, it is important to consider what is and what is not being said (Marstine, 2006). There exists a major gap between the amounts of people of color and women artists and their inclusion in museums and exhibitions. This note about artists and their lack of inclusion in museums and exhibitions must be taken into consideration when exhibitions are a form of communication within and outside of the museum framework (Fuentes, 2014). Therefore, in the case of these marginalized artists, what is being communicated about their lives, experiences, and artistic value in and outside of the museum? In realizing that the lack of inclusion of diverse groups correlates to a lack of understanding and representation of these groups, we must consider how museums can be a space to transform the current narratives around marginalized groups. The museum must be critiqued through critical pedagogical approaches as we question who is supported, displayed, remembered, and heard in the dynamics of recognition and identification in the museum (Mayo, 2013).

Contemporary museum practice and theory reveals that institutional narratives are also encoded in museum workers’ professional practices (Marstine, 2006). Lindauer (2011) states, “New museum theory calls for exhibit developers to debate such questions as: whose knowledge should be disseminated? Who decides? How are the decisions made? These kinds of questions are absent from technically oriented publications outlining how to develop exhibits that
effectively transmit information” (p. 213). Contemporary museum practice and theory advocates for artists to take part in shaping and defining their various endeavors. Klebesadel (2011) states, “Only when emerging artists know how the museum operates can they have an effective voice in the process” (p. 257). Then, artists can become curators and curators can become artists. Klebesadel (2011) states, “Artists can no longer rely on someone else to define and position their work. Sometimes the artist’s statement is the only opportunity they have to communicate to a curator or educator presenting their work” (p. 260). Being a part of the planning and curating process allows one to understand how display connects to hegemonic systems of meaning.

In contemporary museum practice and theory, two notions, postmodernism and feminism, can inform how we view and act within the museum. Postmodern museums envision spaces that are more self-reflective. Marstine (2006) states, “Frames are challenged, fragmented, and made transparent as the museum declares itself an active player in the making of meaning. What’s typically marginalized or beyond the frame is brought inside of it to dissolve the frame itself” (p. 5). With this notion, the museum is constantly reevaluating its practices to acknowledge the politics of representation and the contributions of staff. The museum also attempts to include its communities and visitors in the process. Instead of focusing on presenting knowledge to a generalized audience, the postmodern museum “listens and responds sensitively as it encourages diverse groups to become active participants in museum discourse, nonetheless, in the post-museum, the curator is not a mere facilitator but takes responsibility for representation as she or he engages in critical inquiry” (Marstine, 2006, p. 19). Therefore, the postmodern museum is open to change. It presents opportunities for transformative education as the museum tackles complicated issues in order to address social injustices. This transformative education allows for a pedagogy within the museum and art education that is open to challenge,
inquiry, and resistance; it also allows for new interpretations of art within the context of everyday life (Tapia, 2008). Museums and museum education can help us to understand the social, cultural, and political structures of our society as well as connect to ourselves, museum objects and artworks, and the world.

When feminist theory is applied to museum spaces and practices, significant gender bias is revealed. Although curation is a female-dominated profession, women’s objects, artworks, and histories are often underrepresented and the masculine gaze is favored (Deepwell, 2011; Marstine, 2006). Feminist theory proposes the idea of feminist curation, where exhibitions for women artists are created by women artists, curators, critics, and art historians. With this idea in mind, “Using the feminine not as the mark of an essential femininity or a means to define women, but as a mark of difference, [one can] show how women artists had generated distinct practices which explored, critiqued, and questioned concepts of the feminine and ‘otherness’ in aesthetic terms” (Deepwell, 2011, p. 73-74). Therefore, feminist strategies can contest established exhibition practices and hierarchical aesthetic structures in museums (Deepwell, 2011). Feminist theory calls for a reexamination of art, display, representation, and exhibition practices and norms.

Critical Pedagogy

Contemporary museum practice and theory promotes the need for transformative education for the public through a kind of critical pedagogy that examines and reacts to current structures of domination. Critical pedagogy aims to change education through the inclusion of diverse experiences and by promoting increased access and opportunities for marginalized groups. With critical pedagogy, people can “develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world
not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (Freire, 1970, p. 83). With this critical perception, people act according to how they perceive themselves in the context of certain situations and the world. When people can recognize oppression, they can create new situations through transformative action. Through critical pedagogy, educators can examine what and how we teach along with how students understand their place in their education. Giroux (2011) states, “Critical pedagogy is thus invested in both the practice of self-criticism about the values that inform teaching and a critical self-consciousness regarding what it means to equip students with analytical skills to be self-reflective about the knowledge and values they confront in classrooms” (p. 83). The work of critical pedagogy is very intentional as it critiques, challenges, and changes current societal narratives about values and knowledge. There is a need for consciousness and reflection in education, which leads people to engage in dialogue.

Freire (1970) advocates for dialogue, which encourages critical thinking. Through critical dialogue, people can be educated as active participants in their learning. Students, then, are not just passive recipients of knowledge; they are also creators and transformers of knowledge. Those engaged in this process can recognize that their thoughts and participation are important. Hilton (2013) reveals, “This critical thinking, as a consciousness-raising endeavor, allows participants to see the connections between people and ideas, stimulating new interpretations of socially-constructed knowledge and new possibilities for action meant to bring about a more just future” (p. 611). These connections along with multiple perspectives allow knowledge to be recreated for critical understanding and utilized for social change. Therefore, critical dialogue offers opportunities to become more conscious and understanding of those who we interact with. All who participate can learn from one another. Hilton (2013) reaffirms that “Critical dialogue is a problem-posing discussion setup to ensure equitable access and participation by all members,
constructed to focus on a multiplicity of viewpoints, and designed to bring awareness to social and historical power imbalances to promote action” (p. 603). Following in Freire’s footsteps, Giroux has continued to further the notions of critical pedagogy. Giroux (2011) declares that critical pedagogy is

the outcome of particular struggles and is always related to the specificity of particular contexts, students, communities, and available resources. It draws attention to the ways in which knowledge, power, desire, and experience are produced under specific basic conditions of learning and illuminates the role that pedagogy plays as part of a struggle over assigned meanings, modes of expression, and directions of desire, particularly as these bear on the formation of the multiple and ever-contradictory versions of the ‘self’ and its relationship to the larger society (p. 4).

Critical pedagogy is not a one-size-fits-all kind of pedagogy; it will provide different outcomes based on the context. It also furthers our understanding of what pedagogy can do by questioning and challenging current or traditional pedagogies.

Darder, Baltodano, & Torres (2017) underscore statements by scholars and educators like Carter G. Woodson, Herbert Khol, Bowles and Gintis, and others who promote education that is about the people in the moments that they occupy and that encourages critique of the social institutions that affect our society (p. 1-2). Critical pedagogy allows educators to do just that; it helps students to understand the connections between power and knowledge. Dominant discourses within education attempt to separate these two notions as if they are not interconnected. But, critical pedagogy theorists point out the importance of the connection between knowledge and power. McLaren (2017) notes, “the curriculum represents much more than a program of study, a classroom text, or a course syllabus. Rather, it represents the
Introduction to a particular form of life, it serves in part to prepare students for dominant or subordinate positions in the existing society” (p. 69). Only certain knowledges, ideas, and values are favored and affirmed, which leaves out the experiences of those who do not fit within these prescriptions. This is also reflected in education through the “hidden curriculum” where certain activities and practices benefit the dominant groups and exclude all others. These unintended teachings within school exist outside of the regular curriculum, but also shape and construct students’ knowledge and behavior.

Going a step beyond critical pedagogy, bell hooks (1994) suggests “engaged pedagogy.” Engaged pedagogy calls for the teacher and the students to be active participants in the learning process. This pedagogy stresses the importance of participants becoming critically aware and engaged in their learning. hooks (1994) states, “To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn” (p. 13). This idea of the ‘practice of freedom’ connects to the work of Freire (1970), who emphasized liberatory education, where everyone is actively participating in the creation of knowledge. In regard to education, the educator is not the only voice that matters. In active participation, awareness is linked to oppression and inequalities when we practice collaborative reflection on the current state of our world and the actions we can take to change it. The knowledge gained from critical pedagogy can be used to fuel our actions for change. This knowledge not only comes from books, but also lived experiences. Sharing these experiences allows us to cultivate a space for understanding and promoting the well being of ourselves and other people. The guiding impetus of activism leads us to do work to empower other people (hooks, 1994). Hence, knowledge is a tool that can enrich and enhance the consciousness of previously uninformed individuals who wish to do something meaningful. We should value the expressions of students and other participants when they share their experiences.
ENGAGING BLACK WOMEN IN CRITICAL DIALOGUE

and understandings. It not only empowers the facilitator, but also the facilitated. It requires all
who are involved to be vulnerable and take risks (hooks, 1994, p. 21). Thus, narratives are an
important part when participating in engaged pedagogy.

Need for This Particular Research

Each of the areas of literature I reviewed offered important insights as I developed a
study that brought attention to the art and representation of black women as a marginalized group
in contemporary culture. American culture has a history of racism and sexism, which is also still
pertinent in today’s culture. Black feminist theory, contemporary museum practice and theory,
and critical pedagogy allowed the participants to reflect on the intersections of social and cultural
issues like racism and sexism in relation to African American women and how the group could
respond to those issues. Understanding of Black feminist theory

is not merely concerned with the principle of instruction of Black women by Black
Women and about Black women; it also sets forth learning strategies informed by Black
women’s historical experience with race/gender/class bias and the consequences of
marginality and isolation. [It] aimes to develop a mindset of intellectual inclusion and
expansion that stands in contradiction to the Western intellectual tradition of exclusivity
and chauvinism. It offers the student, instructor, and institution a methodology for
promoting equality and multiple visions and perspectives that parallel Black women’s
attempts to be and become recognized as human beings and citizens rather than as objects
and victims. (Omolade, 1993, p. 31)

Including the intellectual dialogue of and about black women allowed the group of black women
participants to consider their and other black women’s voices and experiences as important to
this research project. Black feminist perspectives help to transform understanding and knowledge
of the traditional ways scholars have conceptualized the intersections and interaction of race and
gender in the arts and museums (Simien, 2004). Focusing on Black feminist theory and
contemporary museum practice and theory challenged the group to question the norms in the art
world and our society.

Viewing dialogue as a tool for art and museum education allowed us to explore the
connections between Black feminist theory and African American women’s art in museums in a
variety of ways. Art and museum educators must engage in critical dialogue in order to be more
inclusive and diverse in their methods of learning, teaching, and practice around artworks, artists,
exhibition spaces, and museums. As the facilitator, the project I created promoted Black feminist
theory as a means for the group of participants to consider opportunities and experiences of
African American women artists. The group rethought narratives and practices commonly seen
in art and museum education through learning about African American women’s art history and
contemporary museum practice and theory. Through a critical pedagogical approach, this applied
project asked the participants to confront the representation of African American women in
museums and address this issue in their art-making for the purpose of an exhibition.
...how does the African American woman artist locate herself within [the current times]? How does she present her views about power and, through art, highlight the dialogic relationship with the viewer about oppression, repression, blackness, and femaleness....? Because it can articulate meaning about class, race, and gender, art is consequential....at the core is cultural politics. Who is empowered; who speaks for whom? (Patton, 1995, p. 49)

Based on my experience as a black woman, an art education student, and a museum intern, I wanted to create an applied project that connected these aspects of my life and work. After understanding the research of Black feminist theory, contemporary museum practice and theory, and critical pedagogy, I decided to facilitate a critical pedagogical experience where the participants, Ashley Crooks, Karina Lewis, Monique May, and I, learned about Black feminist theory and enacted contemporary museum practice and theory. In my role as a researcher, participant, and artist/curator, I understood that exploring Black feminist theory in relation to African American women’s art in museums with a group of black women was a multilayered task.

In terms of creating a critical pedagogical experience for this group of black women, I first thought about how we could address the topics at hand. As a researcher who explored Black feminist theory with her participants, I tried to make all of the activities connect through relevant educational materials that could build on each other and inform our art- and meaning-making. Dialogue with the participants was essential in the planning and implementation of the curriculum guide as well as in assessing what worked best along the way. Although I did maintain control of some aspects of the project, everyone's input was acknowledged throughout the journey. Therefore, everyone was an active participant in this project. I wanted the
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participants to feel informed and empowered by the assignments, readings, videos, presentations, and discussions in which they engaged.

In terms of implementing Black feminist theory, contemporary museum practice and theory, and critical pedagogy in my project design, I utilized each theory in different ways in order for us to learn about, recognize, and apply the theories during the project. In regard to learning about Black feminist theory, we all had limited knowledge of the theory. Thus, we began the project by visiting museums and having museum experiences that reflected Black feminist notions of empowerment. I decided to have museum visiting experiences first as a way to start our critical dialogue about Black feminism and the representation of African American women’s art in museums. We could use our new personal experiences from the museum visits to evaluate and challenge the current structures in place in museum spaces. Next, I wanted us to learn about and read Black feminist theory literature to better inform our work, which could advocate for representation of African American women’s art in museums as well as other diverse and marginalized groups. We could use this new knowledge to guide our art- and meaning-making, which were acts of resistance in the spirit of Black feminist theory. I had the group consider how Black feminist theory could impact museum experiences and how we could share our experiences through our artistic work. Our sharing of our artwork and experience would be a form of knowledge from participating in this project that we would share with visitors to our exhibition. Through our exhibition, we would empower ourselves as well as others.

With contemporary museum practice and theory, we began by visiting museums and exhibitions to familiarize ourselves with these kinds of spaces. Our visitations allowed us to be self-reflective in the art-making and exhibition that followed. By having experiences in
museums, we could reflect on the narratives reflected by the institutions and exhibitions of artwork during our discussions, writing, and art-making. We could also see the ways that African American women’s identity was framed as we questioned and critiqued the museums. By reviewing some aspects of contemporary museum practice and theory, we thought about how our artwork could shape an exhibition space. In particular, I acted not only as an artist, but as the curator. As a black woman, I would curate an exhibition of black women artists’ work about black women’s experiences, representation, and artistic expression. The exhibition was also curated in a manner to include our visitors in the experience and creation of knowledge around Black feminism and African American women artists.

Finally, using critical pedagogy, I facilitated a project to include diverse experiences of black womanhood in relation to learning about Black feminism, African American women’s art, and museums. While increasing our access and opportunities to doing work in museum spaces, I facilitated activity experiences and learning of Black feminist theory, African American women’s art history, and contemporary museum practice and theory. Within the context of this project, my facilitation allowed us to become more conscious and reflective as we actively participated in dialogue. By doing this project, we transformed and created knowledge from our experiences and other sources, and presented it in an exhibition. The exhibition acted as a forum for empowerment for all involved and all who came to see the work. Our work aimed to transform perceptions around representation of African American women’s art in museums through the context of our exhibition.

This study required recognition of racial and gendered experiences to intersect with theory, history, and practice. I welcomed the idea that each person represented the diversity of experiences of black women. In this study, I was not only the facilitator, but also a participant. I
chose to do both roles because I wanted to be an active participant in this experience. For there to be true engagement in this project, power and knowledge would be shared between the participants in the group. I was facilitating and participating in activities with a group that I identified with and that I felt I could learn with as the project took its course. It was important that we, the participants, had an opportunity to reflect on a variety of activities in order to create artwork and host an exhibition.

**Being a Researcher, Participant, and Artist/Curator**

Over the course of the study, I found that my role shifted from that of a researcher, to participant, to an artist/curator. As a researcher, I was intent on facilitating activities and educational materials such as museum visits, art-making, discussions, and presentations, that would allow participants to gain knowledge and experience relevant to the topics and that they could translate into their art-making. As a participant, I completed all of the tasks and reviewed the educational material that I had facilitated for the group for my own understanding and to engage deeply with the group in the topics. Finally, as an artist, and subsequently the curator for our exhibition, I created an artwork reflecting on my experience participating in the project as well as other artworks to support/supplement the exhibition. I also organized and installed, the objects and artworks within the gallery space.

**Being a Researcher**

The experience of being a researcher, participant, and artist/curator for this study offered both benefits and challenges. Being a researcher and a participant made my communication with the other participants easier since I was also creating and completing the tasks along with them. However, it was also challenging to simultaneously create and perform all of the tasks. As the
researcher, I knew how I wanted to navigate the project and adjusted the plan as needed to work for everyone.

In this study, my researcher identity as an art education graduate student and museum intern, my social location as a black woman participant, and my personal occupation as a visual artist informed my interests and research of Black feminist theory and African American women’s art in museums. I approached this study with a gaze characterized by wanting to see and understand my and others’ experiences as black women within the realm of art education and museums. From my educational experiences, I believed that there was a way to do this, and I aimed to create a space where we could explore such a topic in a safe space and enjoy creating art and meaning together.

I knew that there would have to be some adjustments to my plan due to the fact that the participants lived in different cities and were either employed full-time or were full-time students. Thus, I created a curriculum guide of readings, discussions, field trips, and writing and art-making activities for the group to participate in (Appendix A) that would offer time and opportunities for everyone to complete the tasks. While having a curriculum guide in place, I made changes to the guide during the course of project to accommodate time constraints and participant schedules, and when I noticed tasks needed to change. As the facilitator, this curriculum guide acted as a plan based on my review of literature and experiences as a black woman, art education graduate student, and museum intern. Communication between the participants and posting of completed activities occurred via email messages, phone class, video chats, discussion posts in a Google Group, and text messages. The initial guide was sent to the initial seven participants and entailed twelve activities, which can be divided into the following categories: museum visits, writing/art-making tasks, relevant educational presentations, and art
exhibition development. After completing the activities from the guide, the participants reflected on their learning and experiences from the project to inform artwork for the exhibition. The study concluded with the closing of the exhibition, retrieval of visitor comments, posting of visitors’ Dear Black Woman letters to social media, and conducting of exit surveys of the participants.

**Being a Participant**

For this project, it was important that the participants would be black women so that the study could cultivate black women’s relationships with one another as a part of Black feminist thought and the aims of the project. The participants were young adults (over the age of 18, but younger than 30 years old) who self-identified as African American or Black and as women. Participants were contacted via the social media platform, Facebook, with a message detailing the particulars of the research project followed by a Google Form of introductory questions (Figure 1) for participating in the project and an information packet with a consent letter.

**Purpose of the Applied Project and Introductory Questions**

The purpose of this applied project is to critically examine and artistically reflect on how Black feminist theory can be utilized to educate art museum visitors and curate African American women’s art in museums. The aim of the project is to utilize several main ideas from Black feminist theory literature to inform the facilitation of art museum experiences and interpretation of African American women’s art in that particular space.

This project will lead a group of Black women through learning about Black feminist theory, African American women artists, and museum education practices. Having a group of Black women explore this concept will allow them to bring their unique experiences to the forefront of topics relevant to their race and gendered experiences through art. Utilizing this concept, the group will work to create a body of work that reflects a move toward better understanding and increased representation of African American women’s art.

Through an exhibition of artwork, the group will have a chance to question and challenge the impact that Black feminist theory and African American women’s art can have in cultural spaces like museums. The hope is that this
body of work will reflect the need for exposure of marginalized and underrepresented groups in museums and how this can occur through the understanding of critical social theories.

Please answer the following questions!

* Required

1. Email address *

2. After reading the purpose of this project, what are your thoughts on the premise of the project? *

3. Do you have any prior understanding of Black feminist theory? *

4. Have you had any experiences viewing art by African American women? *

5. What kind of experiences have you had in museums? *

6. How do you identify as a Black woman? *

7. What do you expect to do through this project? What do you hope to learn from this experience? *

8. What kind of artwork do you hope to create? What ideas do you have for your art-making?*

9. What questions, concerns, or comments do you have about the project?

10. Please list your address for an upcoming "letter" activity for the project.

Figure 1: Google Form with the Purpose of the Project and Introductory Questions

All of the participants resided in Georgia and were people I was acquainted with. The project initially began with seven participants, including myself. Only four of those participants (Figure 2), including Ashley Crooks-Allen, Karina Lewis, Monique May, and myself, continued and completed the project. The other three participants expressed that they would not be able to participate and either completed relatively few of the activities or none at all.
The participants who completed the project created artist statements for the exhibition and can be described, in their own words, as follows:

Ashley Crooks-Allen is a second year graduate student in sociology at The University of Georgia. They graduated from Emory University with a major in creative writing and a minor in sociology. They are currently interested in Afro-Caribbean identity formation and the Black Lives Matter movement. Ashley is a spoken word artist and has been performing for 7 years. They have performed and competed in numerous venues and events along the east coast. They
wrote and co-directed a play produced by Emory University's AHANA theater entitled “Candles.” They also have acted in the “Vagina Monologues” and “Mirrors” at Emory. Their work is published in “The Pulse: Emory Student Anthology of the Arts.” They are also a founding member of Emory's Alpha Nu Chapter of Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority Inc. Ashley intends to continue creating art as they pursue their career in academia.

Karina Lewis originally hails from Oceanside, CA, but has spent now the better part of her 25 years of life in Georgia. She attended Mercer University where she obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Spanish and Psychology. She is currently a candidate for a Master’s of Science in Microbiology and Immunology from Tulane University in New Orleans, where she currently resides. In her spare time she loves to travel, read, watch anime, and write poetry. Karina aspires to go to medical school and serve underprivileged populations, especially women of color. She has a deep desire to reconcile her future endeavors in the medical field with her deep passion for travel.

Monique May is originally from Brooklyn, New York. She moved with her family in 2008 to Douglasville, Georgia, where she discovered her love for writing and dance. Monique attended Mercer University, majoring in English and minoring in education. After her taste of educational studies in her undergraduate career, Monique pursued a Master’s of Art in Teaching at Georgia College and is now an elementary school teacher. She has taught high school English and elementary English Language Arts and Social Studies. In her spare time, Monique enjoys growing closer to Jesus Christ, spending time with her husband Cedrick, dancing, studying holistic self-care, and working on various health, beauty, and home décor DIY’s. In the future, Monique hopes to become more of a leader in curriculum coaching to help other teachers, and to have a business making all-natural skincare products.
I am a Master of Art Education candidate at The University of Georgia. I am originally from Columbus, Georgia, and currently resides in Athens, Georgia. I am also a Curatorial Intern at the Georgia Museum of Art and a member of Kappa Delta Pi, the international honor society in education. I graduated from Mercer University in 2014 with a Bachelor of Arts in French and Art. While I enjoy painting and drawing in my spare time, I am interested in exploring the application of Black feminism to African American women’s art and museums as well as how that understanding can foster community building and influence the fields of art and museum education.

As a participant, I contemplated my experiences as a black woman alongside the other black women participants. I partook in all of the activities, which included readings, field trips, discussions, and art-making. In the exhibition, I also created the artworks that all of the participants created. I enjoyed getting to participate in the project. I also created some additional pieces of artwork for the show and suggested things that would complement the artwork in the space.

**Being an Artist/Curator**

I intended for the group to have an exhibition from the beginning. Thus, I submitted an exhibition proposal for the Dodd Galleries at the Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia in March of 2017. I had yet to finish planning for this project, but I hoped that the ideas from it would be enough for selection. I soon found out from the Gallery Director, Dr. Katie Geha, that the exhibition proposal had been accepted and that the exhibition would be held from October 12 through November 10, 2017 with an exhibition reception in the evening of October 12th. The exhibition would be installed in a large space, the Gallery Suite, on the third floor of the Lamar Dodd School of Art.
While acting as the researcher and a participant, I also acted as curator of the exhibition. Even though I was the curator, I consulted the other participants every step of the way, asking for their opinions, ideas, and votes on final decisions. I felt that it was important to include them in finalizing an exhibition of their effort and artwork. Overall, I decided the organization of the show and handled most of the installation.

**Project Design**

*Site of the Study*

This study was conducted in a number of sites. Participants were asked to visit the Georgia Museum of Art in Athens, Georgia and the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art in Atlanta, Georgia. At the start of this project, both of these museums had exhibitions featuring African American women artists. The Georgia Museum of Art hosted the exhibition, “Expanding Tradition: Selections from the Larry D. and Brenda A. Thompson Collection,” while the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art hosted “Mickalene Thomas: Mentors, Muses, and Celebrities.” If participants were not able to attend these museums, they were asked to visit one, per my suggestion or one that knew of, that was near the area in which they lived. One participant who could not make it to the planned meeting at the Georgia Museum of Art visited the Tubman Museum in Macon, Georgia. In addition, there was one other planned in-person meeting that took place at Ponce City Market in Atlanta, Georgia, but only Monique was able to attend. Otherwise, participants completed the project activities on their own time at home. The exhibition of the participants’ artwork that took place near the end of the study was held at the Dodd Galleries at the Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia, in Athens, Georgia.
Beginning the Study

I began planning this study in the Spring of 2017 as I reflected on my art education, museum internship, and life experiences as a black woman. The combination of these elements inspired the questions that I considered for this study as well as prepared me for creating the structure of this project. After presenting the purpose and premise of this project, six participants (including Ashley, Karina, and Monique), other than myself, shared their interest in participating. Darder, Baltadano, and Torres (2017) state, “The actual lived experiences cannot be ignored nor relegated to the periphery in the process of coming to know. Instead, they must be actively incorporated as part of the exploration of existing conditions and knowledge, in order to understand how these came to be and to consider how they might be different” (p. 14). Through this project, I processed my current understanding of art and museum education to position Black feminist theory in conversation with museums through the creation of a curriculum guide. In particular, this processing addresses the presence of black female artists in museums. By connecting these concepts, the project led the participants and myself to discussions of our experiences, the topics of the project, and creating artwork for an exhibition. I thought that doing this particular study with other young adults who also self-identified as black women would yield interesting results. Moreover, the participants seemed intrigued by the topic of the project.

Before visiting museums, participants were asked to introduce themselves via a post in the Google Group and sent a form of questions, Purpose of the Applied Project and Introductory Questions Form (Figure 1), through the Google Group and email. In addition to these questions, participants provided their preferred email address for contact and mailing addresses for one of the planned activities. Six of the initial participants responded to these questions. From the first question, the participants seemed very interested in the premise of the project. Elizabeth Mack
said, “I think that this project is super important in that it allows women of color to reflect on the way they are represented in the various forms of media and in particular in museums. We are able to evaluate whether there should be more representation and what are the parameters or appropriate criteria that should be consider when producing black feminist art,” while Monique said, “My thoughts are that I'm glad this topic is being discussed through the medium of artwork. I've been reading so much about the unappreciation of black women that a project focusing on turning that around is refreshing.” The familiarity with black feminism ranged from having none at all to taking an undergraduate course, with most participants having very little prior understanding. The participants also had been exposed to little African American women’s art, and if they had it was usually due to the fact that they sought it out. All of the participants had some experience visiting museums, but varied in the amount that they had visited.

I also wanted to know how the participants identified as black women. The responses to that fifth question were particularly interesting. The responses included a variation in identification and understanding of that identification. I stated, “I feel as though my identity as a Black women represents two separate experiences, but also a conjoined one…..I think this defines my experiences, but also informs the experiences I seek out,” while Ashley stated, “I don't really identify as a Black woman. I'm definitely black and female and present as such frequently so my experiences are essentially the same….the gender spectrum….does not call me to a particular place in it though.” When asked about their expectation, all of the participants expressed a desire to learn something that they had not known before about their experiences and those of other black women and to be able to translate that into their artwork in a meaningful way. Each participant had ideas about the kind of art that they wanted to make, which included using poetry/pose, new media, painting, and sculpture. As far as questions, comments, and
concerns went, the participants seemed ready and excited to engage in the work of the project. One participant stated, “I'm just excited to be a part of something so unique. I hope to get ‘cultured’ for lack of a better word.”

In the curriculum guide, I specified that I wanted to participants to visit museums that were relevant to the topic of the project. It just so happened that there were two major exhibitions of artwork that included work by African American women artists. Unfortunately both exhibitions would close just as the project was beginning. Despite this challenge, I decided that we would visit two different institutions so that we could experience seeing African American women’s art in person. Thus, we began the project by visiting two different museums that featured exhibition with African American women artists. Next, it should be noted that the majority of the project was planned and facilitated simultaneously. I presented PowerPoint presentations, readings, videos, discussion/writing prompts, and art-making activities on Black feminist theory, African American women’s art history, and contemporary museum practice and theory (Appendices J-N). We also received information from museum professionals, who were black women, that worked at these institutions. Following these visits, I planned for us to participate in artistic and writing activities to think about how we could interact with artwork by African American women. We also posted reflections about our visits.

After this, I gave presentations of Black feminist theory, African American women’s art history, and contemporary museum practice and theory as context for our future art-making. These presentations were coupled with readings, videos, and other information that participants could choose to engage with. With these elements in mind, I wanted us to create artwork and text about the work for our exhibition. The exhibition would act as the final reflection on all that we had experienced and learned about.
With the curriculum guide, I provided choices and a variety of options for all of us to engage with the topics. The material needed to be multimodal in the sense that we would work with a variety of “texts.” We needed to engage with visuals, audio, and written texts; have in-person and virtual experiences; and create a variety of artworks. I wanted each of the activities to lend to our dialogue and the group’s understanding of the topics. Although I had created the curriculum guide, I loosely followed it and changed tasks as I saw fit along the way. Many of the changes occurred due to schedule conflicts and the window of time that we were working with in preparation for the exhibition.

**Data Collection**

The data for this study includes the responses participants submitted after completing the activities, the artworks that were created during the project and for the exhibition, the written responses of visitors to the exhibition, and the responses of the participants after completing the project. Data also included the introductory and concluding questionnaire forms; writing and art-making done throughout the project; the participants’ final artwork for the exhibition; the poetry participants’ wrote as their artwork label; and the Dear Black Woman letters and comments written by visitors to the exhibition. This data was collected through a number of avenues. Using an online forum like the Google Group for posting discussion posts, photos, and updates in addition to other mobile forums like texting, emailing, and phone calls made communication with the other participants easier since each of us lived in different places. Hilton (2013) states, “Technological features can be incorporated into a virtual learning space that will make room for identity construction, provide flexibility, and generate opportunities for collaboration, helping to create a learning community that makes possible engagement in critical dialogue” (p. 607). The use of technology allowed us to participate in critical dialogue about Black feminist theory and
African American women’s art in museums as a consciousness-raising act. I also took notes along the way and recorded plans for organizing the exhibition. These notes and plans allowed me to process the tasks of the project and reflect on what to do next.

Implementation

Introduction to Museums

The first portion of the project required the participants to visit museums with exhibitions featuring artwork by African American women. There were two planned visits: the “Expanding Tradition: Selections from the Larry D. and Brenda A. Thompson Collection” exhibition at the Georgia Museum of Art and the “Mickalene Thomas: Mentors, Muses, and Celebrities” at the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art. Before visiting the museums, participants were given an overview of the project (Appendix B). Participants were asked to visit the Georgia Museum of Art (GMOA) for their first museum visit, and given an overview of the activities for that visit (Appendix C). I also sent a presentation about the museum and the “Expanding Tradition” exhibition (Appendix D), which included a variety of artworks by African American artists. If they could not attend this planned museum visit, I suggested museums that they could visit in their local area; gave them an overview of activities for the first museum visit; and a slide presentation about the museums in their areas. I also provided photographs (Figure 3) of the “Expanding Tradition” exhibition in a slide presentation for everyone to view later.
In this Early Pioneers section, we honor the work of artists such as Edward Bemis, Charles Eben Porter, Rose Piper, James Hiram Melrose, Hale Woodruff, Norman Lewis, Charles White, John Wesley Hardrick, Wilmer Jennings, and Albert Alexander Smith.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the United States began to assert its cultural identity. African Americans took an active role in shaping the modern American sensibility through visual arts. Despite limited opportunities (such as the Great Depression), some of these forward thinkers as artists, built private and federal support (through the Works Progress Administration or WPA) for their efforts.

The art they made drew from American traditions in landscape, portraiture, and genre painting as well as innovations in primitivism. They also pictured new social realities promoted by Marcus Garvey and the Nation of Islam, migration to cities for opportunity, and unique cultural traditions.
ENGAGING BLACK WOMEN IN CRITICAL DIALOGUE

**First Section: Back Wall View to the Left**

**Early Pioneers: African American Woman Artist**

**Second Section: Figuration and Abstraction**

In this Figuration and Abstraction section, we have the work of artists such as Beauford Delaney, Cassile Hill, Elizabeth Catlett, Kevin Cole, David Driskell, Angeline Amosu, Bara Walker, Carl Christian, Sam Gilliam, Mildred Thompson, Alvin Loving, Jr., Howardena Pindell, Freddye Styles, and Robert Blackburn.

**Second Section: View of the Middle Wall and First View of the Section**

**Second Section: View to the Left**

**Second Section: View to the Far Right**

**Second Section: View to the Right**
I wanted to provide the participants with the opportunity to actually view African American women’s artwork in person. Kia Pascal, Ashley, Karina, and myself visited the
Georgia Museum of Art over the course of two days. During the GMOA museum visit, participants received a few art materials, such as a sketchbook journal, watercolor, markers, colored pencils, and crayons before entering the museum. While at the Georgia Museum of Art, I led the participants on an informal tour of the museum and the “Expanding Tradition” exhibition and provided them with a reference guide (Appendix E), which I had created while interning at the museum. The exhibition featured artworks of a variety of media and time periods. Although there were works by African American women artists, most of the works featured were by male artists.

I also gave the participants a letter from the exhibition’s curator, Dr. Shawnya Harris, with information about her role in relation to the exhibition. Participants had time to take notes and photos, and make sketches. They also participated in a writing activity, where they had to choose an artwork from the exhibit and write a poem from the artwork’s point of view. These poems were later posted in the Google Group. Afterward, we visited the Lamar Dodd School of Art to view our intended exhibition space and to discuss art-making materials. Participants were asked to post reflections on their first museum visit experience based on prompts in the discussion thread in the Google Group. Participants were also asked to send me headshot photographs for the Change the Frame activity that was to be completed during the project. The additional activity for the first museum visit was not completed.

Next, participants were asked to visit the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art (SCMFA) for their second museum visit, and given an overview of the activities for that visit (Appendix F). I also sent a presentation about the museum and the “Mickalene Thomas” exhibition (Appendix G), which included a variety of artworks by one African American female
artist. I provided photographs of the “Mickalene Thomas” exhibition in a slide presentation for everyone to view later (Figure 4).
Monique visited the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art for her first museum visit, while Kia, Ashley, Karina, and myself visited there for our second museum visit over the course of two days. An overview of activities for those who could not make it to this exhibition was also relayed. While at the SCMFA, I advised the participants to explore the museum and exhibition at their own pace, and the “Expanding Tradition” exhibition and provided them with an electronic copy of the exhibition brochure and reference links (Appendix H). The museum, which hosts exhibition by and about women of the African Diaspora, featured a solo exhibition of artworks.
by Mickalene Thomas. This exhibition was different than the one we had previously seen and provided an interesting contrast for our experiences.

On one day of our visit to the museum, two participants and myself had the opportunity to speak with the Curator of Education, Makeba Dixon-Hill. She provided us with insight about the exhibition, the museum’s focus, and her experiences working in museums. A reflection of that meeting was posted to the Google Group for all participants to view. Participants had time to take notes and photos, and make sketches while at the museum. They also participated in a writing activity, where they had to rewrite an artwork label from the exhibition. These rewritten labels were later posted in the Google Group.

After visiting the museum, participants were advised to visit an art store to further consider the art-making materials that they wished to use. Participants also received large-scale (18” x 24”) versions of the headshots they had sent to me. They were instructed to take it home to complete the Change the Frame activity, where they would alter the image of themselves to change its frame of reference. In doing this, they had to consider the following questions: How do you want to be represented? What elements (words, images, designs) will you use to “frame” your image? What is important about your image? What do you want your focus to be?

Participants also had to post their reflections of their second museum visit in the Google Group based on the prompts given. One participant visited the Tubman Museum in Macon, Georgia for her second museum visit. Also, the participants were asked to create an artwork inspired by an artist that they saw during their museum visits or a black woman artist that they find on their own (Figure 5). I also provided a list of artists for them to explore (Appendix I). Participants posted their artworks from this activity in the Google Group.
We attempted to meet all together in person again after the museum visits, but these attempts did not come into fruition. I maintained contact with the participants via the Google Group, text messages, phone calls, and video chat. After the museum visits, three of the original seven participants expressed that they could not continue.

**Exploring Theory, History, and Practice**

After these museum visits, participants were provided with information and activities about Black feminist theory, African American women’s art history, and contemporary museum practice and theory. In order to connect black feminist theory and contemporary museum practices and theory to the representation of African American women's art in museums, I presented information that would allow all of us to be more conscious and aware of these topics. This included providing experiences and activities that would supplement these presentations. Participants were sent PowerPoint presentations on each topic along with an assortment of readings from books and articles, YouTube videos, writing and discussion questions and prompts, and art-making activities.
For the portion on Black feminist theory, I posted an overview of a variety of activities to connect with the topic (Appendix J). These activities included a slide presentation on Black feminist theory (Appendix K), readings from Black feminist scholars and writers, movie and television show suggestions, YouTube videos on Black feminism, and an art-making activity of creating a group Pinterest Board. I thought that having a variety of activities would help participants gain a better grasp of Black feminism that would aid in their future art-making endeavors. For each of these parts, I created a list of different resources for participants to choose from. The slide presentation offered a short overview of the theory based on Patricia Hill Collins’ book, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (2009). The readings came from four sources: the aforementioned book by Collins, Guy-Sheftall’s *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought* (1995), Lorde’s *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (1984/2007), and Gay’s *Bad Feminist: Essays* (2014). Participants could choose from a pre-selected list of chapters from these books. The movie and television suggestions were chosen based on having Black females as the leads to give participants opportunities to visually engage with representations of black women. I found YouTube videos where black women discussed Black feminism and their life experiences to see how other black women were engaging with the theory. The art-making activity was chosen as a means for participants to begin thinking about the visual representation of African American women’s art in museums and other visuals of black women that could accompany that. Participants were allowed to engage in these activities on their own time and at their own pace. During this time, we did not follow through with the Pinterest art-making activity or the discussion of the readings. I also revised the reading requirement to one reading from each of the four main sources instead of several due to time constraints.
Then, we looked at African American women’s art history. I posted an overview of a variety of activities for the topic (Appendix L). These activities included a slide presentation on African American women’s art history (Appendix M), readings on art history and black women artists from scholarly journals, YouTube videos on black women artists, and an art history art-making project. Just as with our exploration of Black feminist theory, I offered an array of resources for participants to choose from. I wanted us all to be informed of the contributions of African American women artists to art history. I based most of the information in the slide presentation from Lisa Farrington’s book, *African-American Art: A Visual and Cultural History* (2016). Participants were asked to read one to two of the scholarly journal articles and to watch two of the videos to aid in their understanding of the artwork of African American women artists. Again, participants were allowed to engage in these activities on their own time and at their own pace. I decided that we would forego doing the art history art-making project due to time constraints and in favor of this information ultimately informing the group’s art-making for the forthcoming exhibition.

Finally, we explored contemporary museum practices and theory as the last segment of this part of the project. I created another overview of activities (Appendix N). These activities included book chapters and scholarly journal articles on contemporary museum practices and theory, YouTube videos on museum practices, and an art-making activity of completing “Museum of Me” sheets. Again, I provided resources for participants to choose from and engage with on their own. Participants were asked to read one to two of the readings as well as watch two videos about museums. Around early August, we were fast approaching the opening of the exhibition and I decided to forego the art-making activity in lieu of having more time for creating artwork, planning, and installing the exhibition.
Creating Artwork and Curating an Exhibition

“Without a way to name our pain, we are also without the words to articulate our pleasure. Indeed, a fundamental task of black critical thinkers has been the struggle to break with the hegemonic modes of seeing, thinking, and being that block our capacity to see ourselves oppositionally, to imagine, describe, and invent ourselves in ways that are liberatory. Without this, how can we challenge and invite non-black allies and friends to dare to look at us differently, to dare to break their colonizing gaze?” (hooks, 1992/2015, p. 2)

After concluding the museum visits and presentations of information, it was time to create artworks reflecting on the project for our exhibition. By reflecting on all of the project activities and experiences, we were able to participate in reflection and dialogue through our art-making. I asked the participants to focus on creating artworks that reflected what they had learned and experienced during the course of the project. As an art/museum educator, the facilitator of this project, and participant, I took on the role as curator to organize the exhibition of our artworks within a gallery space. While brainstorming ideas and drawing sketches of the installation design, I asked for the group’s input at every step of the way. Everyone’s input went towards the final decisions for installing the exhibition. I thought the exhibition to reflect what it meant to be black women from our perspectives and experiences. The exhibition would act as a critical reflection of how there can be better support and learning from African American women’s lives and art in exhibition spaces. I discussed several title options with the other participants, and we decided on “To Be Black and Female” with the subtitle, “Reflecting on Black Feminism and African American Women’s Art in Museums.” The title reflects on a reading from our Black Feminist Theory section of the project. In the essay, “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female,” by journalist and civil rights activist Frances Beale, she calls on black women to recognize their state of oppression in order to move towards their liberation. Beale (1970/1995) states, “Unless women in any enslaved nation are completely liberated, the change
cannot really be called a revolution….If we are going to liberate ourselves as a people, it must be recognized that black women have very specific problems that have to be spoken to” (p. 154).

The rest of the title reveals the specifics of what we were reflecting on in order to create this artwork in relation to our black and feminine experiences.

As the curator, I wanted to include several elements from the project while incorporating new ones to fit the particular space. Starting at the beginning, I chose to include the show’s poster artwork near the title and exhibition text. Next to this text, there was a stand with cards to access the exhibition’s music playlist (Figure 6), which featured songs by black women.

![Figure 6: Music playlist for the exhibition](image)

I tried to create an extensive list of new and old songs as well as songs across many genres. While the playlist would be played during the exhibition opening, it would not be playing after that time. I wanted visitors to still have the opportunity to listen to music by black women and experience it in the space. On that same wall, I included the artworks from the Change the Frame activity because it was one of our first art-making activities during the project. Participants could
add or change their original artworks if they wanted to before we framed them. All of the works were framed and hung next to each other as a way of introducing ourselves to our visitors. On the next wall, I included a last-minute piece that I made in reflection of a young black girl, Ashanti Billie, who went missing and was murdered around that time. I learned about how incidents like this and others have been a regular occurrence with black girls and women with the help of Ashley. So, I created a piece entitled #BlackGirlsLivesMatter and included the faces and names of some recent girls and women who had gone missing, committed suicide, and lost their lives to violence.

This work was followed by the Welcome to Our Living Room section of the exhibition. The installation of these works would “welcome” the viewers to view our experience of taking part in this project. This included all of our final artworks with the poem instead of traditional label text description; photo collages of what we thought represented our experiences as black females, the black women in their lives, and other inspiring images in relation to our identity; and quotes that we chose from various Black feminist readings, which were placed in frames with mirrors to invoke the reflective nature of the work (Figure 7 & 8).

Figure 7: Ashley’s photo collage in the exhibition (Photo Credit: Mikael Coleman)
For each participant, these elements were placed next to each other in the same order: quote, photos, artwork, and poem to reflect that the Black feminist readings and our understanding and experiences led to creation of those artworks. Monique and Karina’s sections were on the left, and my and Ashley’s sections were on the right. I felt as though Monique and Karina’s artworks would complement each other with their figures of women and flower motifs. And I felt that my and Ashley’s artworks would complement each other with their focus on vision and use of a similar aqua color.

With our final main artworks and poems, it served as our reflection on completing this project and ideas in relation to our lives, Black feminism, African American women’s art, and museums. These artworks required us to be vulnerable and take risks. In this way, the work we created would be able to empower ourselves and others. To accompany this final artwork, we
wrote poems instead of a traditional text to explain the ideas within our works of art. This decision was fueled by one of the Black feminist literature works that was read during the project. Lorde (1984/2007) states, “For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into a language then into idea, and then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we give name to the nameless so it can be thought” (p. 37). This artwork coupled with the poem invited the audience to engage with imagery and text conceptualized by black women.

In the center between the two sections, there was a visual inspiration board, and the Dear Black Woman letters we wrote along with a writing station for visitors to write their own Dear Black Woman letters. I created the inspiration board (Figure 9) with positive images and words of black women with a background inspired by an African American female artist, Alma Thomas.

Figure 9: Inspiration board in the exhibition (Photo Credit: Mikael Coleman)
Above this work, I included a quotation from one of the Combahee River Collective readings of the project. It said, “We realize that the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation is us” (Combahee River Collective, 1977/1995, p. 234). This quotation really spoke to me and the idea of the project as a group of black women working to better understand ourselves and the representation of African American women’s art in museums through Black feminist theory.

On the sides of this work, I placed each of the participants’ framed Dear Black Woman letters. Participants created Dear Black Woman letters, where they would write words of encouragement to empower themselves and other black women. We had to reflect on our identity as black women and think about what they we would say to ourselves, other Black girls and women in our lives, and things that have made a difference in our lives. Underneath the inspiration board and letters, I decided that there should be a letter writing station for visitors to also write their own Dear Black woman letters. Visitors had access to writing utensils, cards, and envelopes. After writing, they could place these letters in a mailbox. The letters would be posted anonymously later on Facebook page for the exhibition. Next to the letter writing station, I thought it would be interesting to include objects that related to our understandings of being black and feminine. The group voted on which items to include in the show. These objects included images of Sojourner Truth with her famous statement “Ain’t I a Woman?” and Michelle Obama with “When they go low, we go high;” a backpack with empowering pin-back buttons; a church hat; a black Barbie doll with an afro; a hair scarf; and a hot comb. Also, in the center of the floor, there was a small, short stand with directions that pointed visitors in toward the different portions of the exhibition (Figure 10).
The directions included “To The Left” in reference to the Beyonce song “Irreplaceable;” “Empower Us” to point viewer toward the Dear Black Woman letter writing station; “Magic That Way” to point toward the Food for the Soul section of the exhibition; and “Boy, Bye” to reflect a colloquial saying for someone to leave and pointing toward the exit.

I also decided to have a space where the other participants would have a chance to curate artworks by young African American women artists. I wanted to curate a space within our curated space. This idea was inspired by the tête-à-tête exhibition space within the Mickalene Thomas: Mentors, Muses, and Celebrities exhibition. I decided to call this part of the installation Food for the Soul. By reflecting on the African American tradition of soul food and the history of black women serving and nourishing their communities, we provided a space to promote young black women artists. Six artists, Kia Pascal, Aminata Foon, Christie Clermont, Nancey Price, Arie Dothard, and Dr. LaKerri Mack, each donated one work for the exhibition. All of the pieces that were donated for this portion of the exhibition came from artists that the participants and I
were acquainted with. While five of the artworks by the first five artists hung on the wall, Dr. Mack’s work was the centerpiece for the table. These artworks were accompanied by a table set with different forms of information, which included quote bookmarks, church-like fans, Black feminist readings, social media information, business cards, and pin-back buttons (and later, stickers). Karina helped me to finalize the designs for these takeaway items. These bits of information were organized on serving trays and containers to connect with the idea of serving soul food. The viewers would be able to take these pieces of information away from this exhibition, consider them in their everyday lives, and support the art of black women. In this way, we could support and empower working African American women artists. We also decided that our exhibition opening would have food for the reception that reflected on the soul food traditions like fried chicken and macaroni and cheese. Monique suggested that we also include vegetarian and vegan options of these same foods to relate the notion that black women maintain a variety of diets. In addition, at the end of this wall, we provided a book on a stand for visitors to comment on the exhibition.

**Opening an Exhibition**

For the exhibition, Monique, Ashley, and I attended and spoke with visitors about the exhibition, the project, and our artwork (Figure 11).
The music playlist played throughout the time of the reception. Also, I decided that we would have food to further reflect on black women serving communities and the soul food tradition. I chose three different black-owned vendors, Back to Edenz (Macon, GA), DaMuNChieZz Food Truck (Athens, GA), and Dawg Gone Good BBQ (Athens, GA), to cater the event. We had fried chicken and macaroni and cheese, but also decided to have the vegan and vegetarian options of these foods to reflect the diverse dietary choices of black women, at the suggestion of Monique. I also acted as the server of the food at the exhibition as a way to commune with the visitors (Figure 12).
It was amazing time to see all of our work come together and for people to see, experience, and engage with it. I wanted the opening of our exhibition to be an experience in multiple ways. I hoped people would enjoy the space and a variety of artistic expressions by black women (Figure 13).
There was food, music, artwork, poetry, and photography all in one space to evoke the idea of how we conceptualized being black and female. We also had a photographer, Mikael Coleman, come to capture the opening reception. After the opening, visitors continued to visit the exhibition, write Dear Black woman letters, and leave comments.
CHAPTER 4

Findings

From the implementation of this applied project, the findings can be organized into three categories: participant understandings, active participant facilitation, and visitors’ response to a call. Participant understandings show what the participants learned from the project. In regard to my active participant facilitation, I was able to carve out a space for the group through providing a critical pedagogical experience while utilizing theory and the plurality of text and experience to curate our exhibition. Finally, the visitors to our exhibition responded to the call for empowering black women in an exhibition space while also thanking us for the work we had done. Altogether these findings show the layers to creating, implementing, and presenting the work of this applied project.

Participant Understandings

*Re-Envisioning Museum Spaces as a Place of Belonging*

Before starting the project, the participants expressed their excitement to learn more about Black feminist theory and to discuss it “through the medium of art,” as Monique stated (M. May, personal communication, May, 17, 2017). While all of the participants had very little exposure to Black feminist theory, each of them had experiences with visiting museums, with most of these being positive experiences. Their experiences with viewing visual art by African American women was minimal. Despite this, the group seemed ready to learn more about the Black feminist theory, African American women’s art, and museums, and to understand how their experiences could be reflected and valued through art.

For the first museum, Ashley, Karina, and I visited the Georgia Museum of Art (GMOA), while Monique visited the Tubman Museum. During our museum visitation experiences, we all
recognized a sense of newness around being in these museum spaces and viewing this visually artistic content. It was one of the few or only times we had seen a large amount of African American art on display and in our regional area. Ashley posted in our Google Group discussion that the *Expanding Tradition* exhibit at the GMOA was really interesting to me. I was not aware of the black art right down the street from where I live. It made me think about how blackness interacts with surrounding white spaces. Here in the middle of gilded frames and art I did not quite get was an oasis of art that felt like part of myself. The earlier pieces that reflected different aspects of black life especially the ones the captured movement were particularly of interest to me. Overall I was excited to discover this exhibit in a space that I did not expect. I think it was necessary in a way I had not previously realized. (A. Crooks, personal communication, June 17, 2017)

At the *Expanding Tradition* exhibition, we noticed how the exhibition highlighted a variety of works, themes, time periods, and aspects of black life present. Monique noted at the Tubman Museum that some of these elements stood out to her as well. While the new and larger Tubman Museum building added a more “official” atmosphere to the artwork, she saw how the museum’s focus on African American art also connected to this project’s focus on examining the representation African American women’s artwork in museums. In the discussion post, she wrote about viewing the quilts, which were composed of various materials like quotes, photos, fabrics, and more. One portion of the quilt that spoke to her stated,

If the educated colored woman has a burden….What is that burden? How can it be lightened, how may it be lifted? Can it be seen better than it can be told? Does the burden bulge with it’s inseparable companions—Shame and Prejudice? Can the intelligent
woman lend a hand not alone in the school room, but also as a public lecturer giving
advice….knowledge that will change a whole community and start its people on the
upwards way? (M. May, personal communication, July, 22, 2017)

As the group explored another museum experience at the Spelman College Museum of
Fine Art, we strongly connected to the idea of a space by, for, and about women of the African
Diaspora. While the exhibition only hosted work from one artist, Mickalene Thomas, we all
expressed the sentiment of enjoying the various media that were present and the comfortable
feeling of being in that space. Karina remarked that the seating arrangements in the space made
her feel welcomed to become enveloped in the experience of the space. Monique felt this way as
well, stating “I enjoyed the fact that the artist’s exhibit felt like home in a sense. There were
familiar books on the floor that I had seen in our home growing up. The floor tiles reminded me
of my grandma’s house and the patterns of the fabric on the ottomans were what I always knew
as associated with Black culture” (M. May, personal communication, July, 22, 2017). We also
were interested in the various videos presented, especially those from the tête-à-tête exhibition
space, curated by Mickalene, within the Mickalene Thomas: Mentors, Muses, and Celebrities
exhibition. In watching it, I thought about “the many layers of Black womanhood….the un-
layering that needs to occur. The masks we wear. The ideas trapped in the ideological silhouette
of Black women. How the experiences of Black women need to be unwrapped, unleashed, and
unlocked” (A. Coleman, personal communication, June, 7, 2017). The experience here can be
summed up by this part of Ashley’s discussion post: “it made me think what if this was a vision
of a world where we were used to so much representations of Black women in our media” (A.
Crooks, personal communication, June, 17, 2017).
The group also received a letter from Dr. Shawnya Harris, the curator of *Expanding Tradition* and of African American and African Diasporic Art at the GMOA, and spoke with Makeba Dixon-Hill, the Curator of Education at Spelman College Museum of Fine Art. The letter and meeting allowed us to get a better understanding of the work that black women museum professionals were doing. These also were a personal invitation to see the museum as a place of belonging. With two different museum experiences under our belt, the group expressed that we were beginning to feel more comfortable in museum spaces. We could see ourselves better represented in the exhibitions that were present; and we felt as though this should be a regular occurrence. We should be able to see ourselves reflected, valued, and empowered in museum spaces. With exhibitions like these, and curatorial and educational practices that are inclusive, museums feel more accessible in terms of reaching our lives and experiences. It seemed more possible for us to envision creating artwork and having our own exhibition.

**Re-Interpreting Museum Text**

During and after our museum visits, I wanted the participants to think about the written text that is found in museums. I wanted them to have the opportunity to interpret the art they were seeing through writing while prioritizing our gaze and understandings. I was inspired by the essay, “Poetry Is Not a Luxury,” by Audre Lorde (1984/2007) when I included the poetry activity as a means to interpret artwork. Lorde (1984/2007) states, “poetry [is] illumination, for it is through poetry that we give name to those ideas which are—until the poem—nameless and formless, about to be birthed, but already felt” (p. 36). During the first museum visit, we picked artworks in order write a poem based on the artwork’s point of view. We had to think about the visuals we were seeing and think about what the artwork would say if it had a voice. How would
it describe itself? For example, for my artwork point-of-view poem, I chose *Restraint* by Kara Walker, which was featured at the Georgia Museum of Art (Figure 14). I wrote,

I am shackled by your ignorance, I am a captive, tortured by your hate.

I am restrained, Restrained only in my physical form.

You may harm my body, But you cannot harm my soul.

You may see only my blackness as an affront to your whiteness, Therefore, your opened eyes only view my silhouette.

Meanwhile, I close my eyes, not to see blackness, But to see my inner beauty.

I see my humanity, I see me outside of my restraint.

I see blackness as my solace, I see blackness as my freedom.

I see blackness as being unrestrained.

(A. Coleman, personal communication, May, 9, 2017)

*Figure 14: Amber’s Google Group Post for the Artwork Point of View Poem*
I wanted to convey the idea of being enslaved physically, but retaining one’s mental strength. While some may see the figure in this work as being contained by others, the inner self contains an internal freedom. The figure has a vision that is positive and not limited by the circumstance.

In the next writing activity, we rewrote an artwork label from the second museum visit. We had to think about how we would describe the work of art. What is important for us to say about the artwork? In Ashley’s post, they rewrote the label for *Sister: Shug Avery Breakfast* by Mickalene Thomas (Figure 15).

They titled the work as *Another Me: Purple reflections of myself*. They wrote, “This collection of stills from a color purple [*sic*] reflect how multidimensional this production was by portraying the characters in multiple colors. It’s mirrored surface allows you to see yourself in the characters. They can become yourself, in the same way that I first saw myself in the film...”
adaptation” (A. Crooks, personal communication, June, 17, 2017). They conveyed the connection between multidimensionality of the characters from the film, *The Color Purple*, with the use of the color purple and other colors. They note how the reflective property of the artworks leads the viewer to consider themselves in relation to the character. The artist can see herself reflected in this film and wanted to share that experience with others.

To further the idea of writing our own narratives and understandings of art, I asked that each of us write a poem for our artwork labels for our exhibition (Figures 16-19). As a combination of the two writing tasks that we had completed before, we now had to do the same for our own artwork. We had to reflect on our artworks, consider what needed to be said, and how it could be said through poetry. For Ashley’s label (Figure 16), they talked about the idea of gaze and vision and how that connects to the recognition of black women. The recognition of black women allows for liberation, the ability to be soft in a world of hardness. Liberation of this kind would allow black women to be themselves. It is not just about others’ perspectives of black women, but black women’s unique perspectives. It is important to think about what they see and think. In Monique’s poem (Figure 17), she equates the wild to the world we live in, and how our work, words, and actions are like seeds being sown. In the midst of the chaos of the world, black women are thriving where we are not supposed to. Black women are defeating obstacles and persevering. There is a rootedness that allows us to remain triumphant.
With my text (Figure 18), I compared magic with the essence of black women in relation to the popular culture phrase, “Black Girl Magic.” In my opinion, the use of the word “magic” implies a kind of wondrous quality that is admired in a person. This person is “magical” because they are doing something that others would want to emulate or deem as positive. I wanted to reflect my perspective on being a black woman with this concept. The magic that we as black women have is beyond limitations. Black women are like art, and have a natural beauty and strength about us. Although there is a natural quality, it is also self-defined by the way we choose to express ourselves. For Karina’s label (Figure 19), she wrote about how in the midst of hate, black women have still progressed. Oppressors have tried to demean and suppress black women.
with words, trying to keep us down. But, black women have thrived in resistance to that and made their own way out of the negativity.

Amber Coleman
*MAGIC*, 2017
acrylic on canvas

I wanted to show magic, but I didn't know what that really meant.
To show the magic I see in the Black women everyday. The magic I wish to embody.
So, it took a while for me to see her.
Maybe because I also struggle to see myself.

She was not just in the painting, she was the painting. She was MAGIC.
Uncontainable and radiant beyond compare.
Crossing lines and spilling off edges.

I saw a part of myself that I never intended to see.
But, also constructed by self-defined actions to heal, protect, empower, and change the world.
It's not only our way of being, but an expression of ourselves and our many shapes, textures, and colors.
Our magic is a natural halo. It doesn’t come in one size fits all, but it fits just right for us.

Karina Lewis
*And Still We Rise*, 2017
mixed media on canvas

They may shroud us in their hateful words
Hey black girl, you will never be anything
… become anything
You are lower than dirt
Beneath the feet of those who would trample us
Still we rise.

*Figure 18 & 19: Amber and Karina’s Final Artwork Poem/Labels*

**Using Experience as Knowledge: Creating Art for an Exhibition**

Over the course of the study, we created several artworks that required us to reflect on the project activities, Black feminist theory, and our thoughts and experiences from participating in the project. One of the first art-making activities we did was the Change the Frame activity (Figure 20).
With this activity, we had to alter a large-scale black and white photo of ourselves to change its frame of focus. For example, with Monique’s piece (Figure 21), she expressed in the discussion post that she wanted to make herself look regal as a way to represent her worth. She also used plants for the crown to symbolize a growth mindset….pearls to represent my brain and pearls of wisdom….jewels and gold ribbon for my eyes and mouth to portray the value in my perspective and experience and the value in my voice. The lace is supposed to look like a queen's collar, but also is a reminder that I am to be treated as delicate lace. The rocks are a contrast to the lace, plants, gold and jewels to represent struggles, or difficult times that can sometimes diminish one's value to the outside world. I kept my skin gray because I didn't want it to be a focal point, and I kept the background gray to represent the importance or lack thereof of how people on the outside view me.
(M. May, personal communication, July 22, 2017).

Each element represented a concept that Monique personally connected to and wanted the viewer understand. For my piece (Figure 22), I wanted to focus on voicing my feelings about myself that I do not always verbally express. The background is full of different sayings of affirmation. It is about acceptance and finding peace with myself. I wanted to express how I feel proud to be the person that I am and do not want to be boxed in by others’ conceptions of what I should be. Before the exhibition, we had time to add or revise these works.
At the beginning of the project, we discussed writing Dear Black Woman letters. These letters (Figures 23-26) allowed us to write words of encouragement to empower ourselves and other black women. We had to reflect on our identification as black women. We thought about what we would say to ourselves; what we would want to say to other black women in our lives; things that we would say to young black girls; and things that have made a difference in our lives as a black women.

For Monique’s letter (Figure 23), she stressed the idea of remembrance. Through a series of questions she asks black women how they found and see themselves. She asks, “Remember the time when you felt your roots?....Remember when you recognized your power?....Remember when you realized you were beautiful?....Remember when you were finally noticed?” (M. May,
personal communication, October 5, 2017). She asks these questions to recognize the unique experiences of black women and the positive ways that they can define themselves.

![Monique's Dear Black Woman Letter](image)

*Figure 23: Monique’s Dear Black Woman Letter*

With Karina’s letter (Figure 24), she emphasized how black women are often tired of being negatively defined by others. She advises them to love themselves, have courage, and persevere. She wrote, “Live your truth black woman. And only the truth that you dictate. They hate you when you’re weak black woman, They’ll hate you even more when you’re strong….Love black woman. When the world gives you so many reasons to hate, love harder black woman. You are
incredible black woman. Never forget black woman” (K. Lewis, personal communication, October 4, 2017).

Figure 24: Karina’s Dear Black Woman Letter

In Ashley’s letter (Figure 25), they focus on acknowledging the effect black women have had in their life. They are thankful for black women and reflect their personal connection and experiences with them. They wrote, “I don’t know whether to write you a thank you note or a
love letter. You’ve been my mother, sister, friend, lover, mentor. You’ve helped me grow in countless ways” (A. Crooks, personal communication, October 4, 2017).

Ashley

DEAR BLACK WOMAN,

I DON’T KNOW WHETHER TO WRITE YOU A THANK YOU NOTE OR A LOVE LETTER.
YOU’VE BEEN MY MOTHER, SISTER, FRIEND, LOVER, MENTOR.
YOU’VE HELPED ME GROW IN COUNTLESS WAYS.
YOU WERE THERE FOR ALL OF THE MEDALS AND THE LOSSES.
YOU’VE BEEN THERE FOR EVERYTHING FROM BROKEN TOYS TO BROKEN HEARTS.
YOU TAUGHT ME TO COOK AND TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.
YOU TAUGHT ME HOW TO STAND ON MY OWN TWO FEET.
YOU COVERED FOR ME WHEN I GOT INTO TROUBLE.
YOU DRANK WINE OVER CHEESE AND TOOK SHOTS OVER TABOO.
YOU ARE RADIANT IN A WAY THAT I CANNOT DESCRIBE.
YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL NO MATTER WHAT ANYONE ELSE TELLS YOU.
YOU HAVE EYES THAT HOLD LIGHT LIKE NOBODY ELSE.
YOUR MELANIN IS ALWAYS POPPIN.
YOU ARE BLACK GIRL MAGIC BUT YOU ARE NOT UNBREAKABLE.
YOU’VE LET ME INTO YOUR LIFE.
YOU CAN BE SOFT SOMETIMES, WHEN YOU WANT.
ALWAYS WHEN YOU WANT.
YOU ARE WAY I THINK I WANT TO BE WHEN I GROW UP.
YOU ARE GOALS.
YOU ARE ASPIRATION.
AND SHOES TOO BIG TO FILL.
YOU ARE ADVICE I DIDN’T KNOW I NEEDED.
WORDS LIKE HUGS.
HUGS LIKE SOUL FOOD.
AND I CAN NEVER REPAY YOU BUT ONE DAY I MAY BE LIKE YOU TO SOMEBODY ELSE.

ALL MY LOVE,

LEY

Figure 25: Ashley’s Dear Black Woman Letter

For my letter (Figure 26), I wanted black women to know that they are seen and supported. I wanted to express things that would affirm them and give them hope moving forward. I wrote, “I see you. I recognize you. I believe in you. I’m here for you. Sometimes, I think that’s what we all need to hear. That we are not alone and that we have support to lift ourselves up” (A. Coleman, personal communication, September 27, 2017).
Amber

Dear Black Woman,

I see you.
I recognize you.
I believe in you.
I’m here for you.

Sometimes, I think that’s what we all need to hear. That we are not alone and that we have support to lift ourselves up. To all the young Black girls and the women that they become, you matter. You are worthy of respect and love.

You are beautiful and strong.
You have the ability to do so much more than you think.
Take the time to see yourself.
Recognize yourself.
Believe in yourself.
Be there for yourself.
Don’t forget about you in the process of living life.
And don’t forget about your sisters around you.
We are strong together.

So, lift each other up and push each other forward.
Love and appreciate the skin that you’re in.
And remember:
I see you.
I recognize you.
I believe in you.
I’m here for you.

Your sister,

Amber

Figure 26: Amber’s Dear Black Woman Letter

As a way to reflect on all of the topics we had explored and the project as a whole, we each created one final artwork, with the accompanying poem as the label (Figures 27-30). With Monique’s piece, *Wild*, the viewer sees a collaged sculpture (Figure 27). The head of the woman is surrounded by an abundance of nature (grass, moss, leaves, and flowers). The face and neck are filled with a collage of different images of black women and words like “triple threat” and “leave your mark.” The images and words are scattered across the head like seeds scattered across the ground. In the midst of this, the head is firmly rooted to the ground.
In Karina’s work, *And Still We Rise* (Figure 28), the viewer can see the figure of a black woman crouched down with her closed bud on her head. She is stuck in the ground and being kept down by the word nigger. The next two figures in the center are beginning to stand and move above the ground. Their buds are beginning to open more and more. They are persevering and moving over and past the word dirty. Finally, the last figure has overcome with the flower in full bloom standing over the word nappy.
With Ashley’s piece, *Soft Focus*, there is a large pair of glasses (Figure 29). While the viewer looks at the glasses, the glasses are looking at the viewer and asking them to think about the concept of gaze in relation to black women. Within the lenses, there is a soft white glittering effect connecting to the idea of black women’s vision and outlook.
In my work, *MAGIC* (Figure 30), I wanted to show the essence of a black women with a glow coming off of an undefined figure. But her “magic” is spilling off of the canvas and crossing lines. The words in her hair and body allow her to define herself. The variety of color expresses the different lives and experiences of black women, while the gold halo remains the constant of the idea that black women are special in their own right. The visuals in all of these works connect back to the poems that each of us wrote for the labels. The poems act as a supplemental textual artwork to the visual artwork and allow us to express our ideas in more than one way.
Connecting Process to Product

In the exit survey, we had the opportunity to reflect on our experiences of participating in this project and moving from ideas and learning to presenting our work in an exhibition. Overall, we felt that we were not initially sure what to expect from this project. However, the project took us on a journey which resulted in a great experience for all of us, and the end result was better than imagined. In terms of our understanding and perception of learning about Black feminist theory, museums, and art by African American women, and making artwork for an exhibition, our responses varied.

Karina felt like she gained a better understanding and appreciation of black feminism. She enjoyed working with a group of black women and this experience made her want to seek
out more spaces made for and by black women. She had always loved visiting museums, but this project made her want to seek out more black spaces in museums. In terms of her perception of art by African American women and her art-making, she expressed her admiration for these artists’ work and happiness for stepping out of her comfort zone. She wrote, “We create such beauty from such pain. Shunned on every level we continue to thrive….I didn't think my artwork would turn out as well as it did.” The artwork she created was influenced by the Mickalene Thomas exhibition at Spelman College Museum of Fine Art and thinking about ancestry and the hardships black women have faced. Creating this work made her happy to be a part of an artistic platform. She also felt that this project made her think harder about how black women’s art is incorporated in museums.

While her view of museums did not change, Monique felt that her initial understanding of Black feminism from college courses had evolved during the project. She stated, “My understanding of Black feminism was based in the era when black people were not seen as humans in the laws and women did not have equal rights. However, now I understand the shift in black feminism in our ‘post-racial’ society. The term post-blackness stood out to me.” She also noted that these were terms that she had not heard of before and it changed her ideas about the need to bring more awareness to Black feminist artwork. She also learned that there were many purposes of art by African American women, including self-expression and affirmation. This thought was supplemented by her museum visit experiences where she noticed an emphasis on culture in the artworks. These works asked for the viewer to be aware of the “roots of African American women and their overlooked contributions to society.” In terms of making art, Monique expressed that art is not something that everyone has the vision to do or capability to execute well. However, creating her own artwork, influenced by the visit to the Mickalene
Thomas exhibition and participating in the exhibition helped her to understand how African American women could be represented in museum-like spaces. She had not previously realized how little representation there was of black women’s art in museums.

For Ashley, their understanding and perception changed in relation to Black feminist theory, African American women’s art, and museums. They learned more about Black feminist praxis and the importance of Black feminist art and cultural spaces. They also felt that museums “became a space [they] could see [themselves] in. It wasn't just a place for far away abstractions [they] couldn't relate to.” In the past, they had rarely encountered visual art by African American women, but this project had exposed them to it in a more conscious matter. They felt that is was interesting to take on visual art since they had experience as a poet, actor, and dancer. The experience with the project pushed them past what they thought they were capable of. With their artwork, they tried to focus on “idea of the unique perspective of Black women and seeing differently and even being able to control our narrative through art so that we are seen differently as well.” Creating that artwork and being a part of the exhibition allowed them to see that representation of black women in museum-like spaces was within the realm of possibility. By the end of the project, engaging in museum spaces felt normal to Ashley. By connecting Black feminist theory to art, Ashley was able to think about the visual concept of seeing differently.

In regard to my own experiences, my perception did not change much in relation to art by African American women or museums. I enjoyed seeing their art and creating art as an African American woman. I learned more about our contributions to art history and wanted to see more art by African American women in the future. I began this project with an existing love of museums, but the experiences of this project enhanced that love. I also learned more about what museums and museum professionals are doing to increase representation of diverse groups. I
want to “seek out more exhibitions and museums with ample representation of artists who look like me” in the future. During the project, my understanding of Black feminism grew. Many of the readings resonated with my thoughts and experiences. I found that Black feminist theory was a way to articulate my and others’ lived experiences in a new way. This awareness allowed me to see Black feminism as a tool of empowerment. It made me proud to identify with this group and create work together. With respect to art-making, this project showed me what I could do. I had thought about creating art about my experiences as a black woman before, but now nothing is holding me back. The project taught me that I could be successful creating artwork about my experiences as a black woman. My artwork was influenced by Audre Lorde’s “Poetry Is Not A Luxury.” I used “poetry in my artwork as a way to give voice to the work and myself. I was also influenced by Patricia Hill Collins' notion of the politics of empowerment. I wanted my artwork to be empowering to myself, other Black women, and people in general.” Making this work and having the exhibition showed me the possibilities of how African American women’s artwork can be exhibited anywhere. I saw how there was value in the artwork and experiences of black women. Spaces where we can have exhibitions about our experiences should exist more often. This project allowed me to understand the necessity of the representation of art by African American women in museums. Black women need to be able to see themselves and feel valued in museums, but we can also create our own legitimate exhibition spaces.

All of the participants felt that the visitors to the exhibition were able to understand the group’s and other African American women’s experiences better. All of the participants expressed that they would participate in a project like this again with the exception of Ashley, who felt that a project like this takes a lot of time. The group felt that the exhibition was successful and had an impact on those who viewed the work. Everyone also conveyed that they
ENGAGING BLACK WOMEN IN CRITICAL DIALOGUE

wanted to continue to learn more about Black feminism, African American women’s art, and museum practices. Ashley and Monique expressed that they probably would hold off from creating more visual artwork like they did for the project. Karina and Monique felt that this experience would influence other kinds of art they would make. I expressed that I would definitely continue doing artwork about black women’s experiences.

From these understandings, the participants were able to pull from different aspects of learning about Black feminist theory, African American women’s art and their representation in museums, and educational and curatorial practices in order create artworks for the purpose of their own exhibition. Having Black feminist theory prioritized as an educational part of this project allowed the participants to understand and appreciate the theory better, especially in terms of its connection to art. They connected with the idea of the necessity of having space to represent one’s narratives, experiences, and ideas in a public cultural institution, and expressed that in their artwork and their accompanying text. Moreover, they used the prompt of creating artwork as a way to shine a light on the unique experiences of the racial and gendered group to which they identify. Through this critical examination, the participants successfully created an exhibition that reflected contemporary trends in educational and curatorial practices.

Active Participant Facilitation

Carving Out a Space: Creating a Critical Pedagogical Experience

As the facilitator, I found that my role was not only that of an educator, but also co-creator in the experience of this project. I constructed the curriculum guide with the intention that I would also be a participant. I felt that my participation would be invaluable to me as a researcher and would also allow me to understand the process of the project I had created better. I participated in all of the activities and in the exhibition. I often discussed the particulars of the
activities I had planned with the other participants to get their opinions on the tasks. During the planning for the exhibition, I frequently asked the participants for their input on different details and the organization of works. It was challenging to plan and complete all of the tasks. But, I also enjoyed creating the curriculum guide and seeing how I responded to my own tasks. For example, I enjoyed doing the artwork point of view poem and rewriting the artwork label. It was interesting to engage with works of art in a thoughtful way that I do not usually do as a museum visitor. By doing activities such as those, I was also able to think about how I engaged and wanted to engage with art by African American women in museums more deeply.

As an art/museum educator trying to implement a critical pedagogical experience, I found some success with the experience I had created. Early in this process, I realized that I wanted there to be a number of different activities for us to engage in. This included art-making, writing, visiting museums, reading, watching videos, and discussing, which would allow us to engage with Black feminist theory, African American women’s art, and museum in a variety of ways. While I successfully planned and provided a variety of activities, I realized that for our given time period not all of the activities were necessary. I decided to make changes to our curriculum guide when necessary. For example, I removed the Pinterest Board and Museum of Me Sheet activities from the intended plan due to the time of exhibition installation nearing. I also tried to do video chat and Google Group discussions in lieu of in-person discussions when scheduling conflicts continued to arise.

The critical pedagogical experience that I planned and created for this project attempted to include diverse experiences of black womanhood as well as promoted increased access and opportunities for black women in museums. The participants’ backgrounds and fields of work varied. For example, while my field of work included the arts, education, and museums,
Monique was an educator who taught English and social studies. Ashley was a sociology graduate student who was also a spoken word artist while Karina was a microbiology and immunology graduate student. Although having various fields of work is only one aspect of our experiences, this variety does reflect the group’s diversity. And it can be assumed that our experiences of black womanhood were just as diverse. Moreover, through the activities I planned, I wanted to increase our connection to the idea of African American women’s art in museums. That is why we visited more than one museum with differing exhibitions that featured African American women’s art. With this reasoning, it moved me to also have the group receive information from two black women museum professionals from different areas of work within the museum. Dr. Shawnya Harris was a curator of art for GMOA while Makeba Dixon-Hill was a curator of education for SCMFA. In addition, this is why I also included writing and art-making activities that reflected on both museum visits. Upon reflection, the museum visitation and activities were one of the most successful parts of the project. I thought that it was important to have a multi-layered experience within the museum settings if we were to create art for a similar setting. Having these experiences with museums allowed the group to engage deeply with the idea of representation of African American women’s art in museums.

Furthermore, I think that I created an interesting experience for all of the participants where we were able to see our project experience and activities as knowledge that was transmitted through our exhibition. While the curriculum guide provided critical pedagogical activities, I think that the facilitation of the project was lacking in that respect. It was challenging to coordinate a project where the participants lived in different cities. I think that I was able to facilitate the activities in a general manner where I would send the information to everyone and provided spaces for us to respond in the Google Group, but I was not successful in facilitating
participant-to-participant interactions. Most of the interactions occurred in mass from me to everyone else or individually between me and the others. I think that I could have encouraged more participant-to-participant interaction as well as tried to incorporate more opportunities for collaboration. I think I succeeded in being an active participant and facilitator, and opening up a space for the other participants to be active. But I do not think that I offered space for the participants to see themselves as facilitators or as teachers in this experience.

When it came to installing the exhibition, I had general sense of what everyone was creating and used that to plan and curate the exhibition. While I asked for the other participants’ input as I came up with ideas for the exhibition design, I wish that we had more time and I had created more opportunities for us to collaboratively curate the exhibition. For example, I created a list of different objects that I associated with being black and feminine. I also asked for some input on the list from the other participants as I compiled the list. Then, I had everyone to vote on the various black and feminine objects that we should include in the exhibition. In the end, I made most of the final decisions as to what was included and what was not since I gathered, organized, and installed all of these items (Figure 31).
Overall, I was pleasantly surprised with how the exhibition came together. The organization of the exhibition and works of art complemented each other well. Although I shared the exhibition plan and details about the organization of the exhibition, the other participants were surprised by how their artworks and the exhibition came together. For example, Monique stated, “The moment that stuck out to me was the reactions of other people at the actual show. Some people looked surprised. I think the show was elegant and magical. The outcomes were not what I expected, but they were neither better or worse than what I expected—just different” (M. May, personal communication, February 15, 2018).

It made me realize that although we had learned some things about contemporary museum practice and theory that was not the same as understanding how an exhibition is created. It made me realize that we had seen exhibitions and we were having this experience of an
engaging black women in critical dialogue

Exhibition, but I had not explored that part in detail with the group. The curation of exhibition was essentially my interpretation of how the elements of this project could go together, but it may not have been organized in the same manner if the entire group had been involved in the curation.

Utilizing Theory and the Plurality of Text and Experience in Curating an Exhibition

As an art/museum educator, this project allowed me to learn about Black feminist theory, contemporary museum practice and theory, and critical pedagogy and use them to inform the curation of our exhibition. Each of these theories allowed me to curate in a thoughtful manner as I considered how our work from the project should be presented in an exhibition space. My curation focused on reflecting the plurality of texts and experiences of black women. I wanted the viewers to see how each of the participants had engaged with the concept of understanding Black feminism in relation to the representation of African American women’s art in museums.

I was influenced by the contemporary museum concept of the artist being the curator and the curator being the artist. Utilizing this concept to curate the exhibition, I was able to reject creating a hegemonic display of meaning by prioritizing the representation and narratives of the participants and black women in our gallery exhibition. This artist/curator concept is similar to the critical pedagogical approach of teacher being an active participant like students in the construction of knowledge. I also took on the approach of feminist curation for this exhibition as I, a black woman, curated an exhibition about black women with the work of black women artists. I prioritized the black feminine gaze as I planned how to organized the works of art and sought to use black femininity as an aesthetic mark of difference. In this way, I would implement the critical pedagogical concept of promoting increased access and opportunities for a marginalized group through the curation of this exhibition. I also incorporated the postmodern
approach to this theory to create a reflective space that acknowledged the politics of representation of African American women’s artwork. I wanted the exhibition to reflect our sentiments of being black women while also allowing the visitors to engage in their interpretation of what being a black woman meant to them (Figure 32).

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 32: Beginning of the exhibition (Photo Credit: Mikael Coleman)**

From Black feminist theory, I learned how the scholarship has allowed black women to promote their voices and articulate their experiences as a means of empowerment. With this understanding of Black feminism in mind, I wanted to include some of the Black feminist theory literature that we had read during the project. By including this literature in the form of a quote on the wall, and print outs and quote bookmarks on the *Food for the Soul* table, the audience would also be able to take something that we had learned with them as they left (Figure 33).
They would engage with some of the same reading material that we had as we created artwork for our exhibition. As a critical pedagogical approach, providing this reading material allowed us to further dialogue for the mean of critical thinking about Black feminism and African American women’s art in museums. The knowledge presented in these readings may have come from books, but they also shared lived experiences as a form of knowledge. The inclusion of this literature connected to the contemporary museum practice and theory notion of creating critical dialogue in museums and the exhibition as a form of communication. In having this experience of our exhibition, I hoped that the audience would be able to see how Black feminism had been interpreted in our individual artworks and weaved through the exhibition. Being able to take something away with them, I hoped that the audience would consider Black feminism in their own lives and work.
In addition to including Black feminist theory literature, I organized the exhibition in a manner that reflected on the Black feminist notions of engaging in acts of resistance and promoting activism. I began the exhibition with our Change the Frame artworks as a way to introduce each of the participants to the audience (Figure 34).

![Image of Change the Frame exhibit installation](Photo Credit: Mikael Coleman)

The interesting thing about these works is that we each had the opportunity to change our image to reflect how we wanted to be represented. Utilizing the critical pedagogical concept of contemplating how we perceive ourselves in this society in order to change societal narratives, we took control of our own images to highlight how we wanted to be framed. I used the idea of framing from contemporary museum practice and theory to think about how our identities were being represented by this exhibition and the narratives that our viewers would receive by viewing our artworks.

Next, I included an artwork, #BlackGirlsLivesMatter, as a call to activism (Figure 35). In having this piece follow the Change the Frame artworks, I thought about how the Change of Frame artworks allowed each of us was advocating for ourselves as black women as well as the
representation of African American women’s art in museum spaces, but that there were many black women’s voices and experiences that also needed to be heard. I included this piece as a critical pedagogical means to raise the viewers’ consciousness and understanding of issues pertaining to black women. In creating the #BlackGirlsLivesMatter piece as a response to the tragedies of black girls and women losing their lives and placing it next to our Change the Frame artworks, I wanted to emphasize the diversity of experiences of black women as well as the need for activism on their behalf. We can control our own images while also advocating for others.

Figure 35: Opening reception visitors viewing the #BlackGirlsLivesMatter artwork (Photo Credit: Mikael Coleman)

The advocating for black women also occurred as I decided to curate the Food for the Soul space within our exhibition to support other young black women artists (Figure 36). I wanted to empower these artists who were also empowering black women and resisting
controlling images of black women in their artworks. By including space for activism in the exhibition, empowerment could ensue as we shared experiences and promoted the well being of black women. Through critical pedagogical approaches, I used our new knowledge to make meaningful spaces.

![Figure 36: Food for the Soul section of the exhibition (Photo Credit: Mikael Coleman)](image)

Following the #BlackGirlsLivesMatter piece, I placed our final artworks that reflected on the project in the Welcome to Our Living Room section. I gave this section of artwork that particular title to relate that we were taking a critical pedagogical approach of being vulnerable and taking risks by creating and exhibiting these works about being black and female. Moreover, I promoted the idea that black women’s knowledge and values can be affirmed in exhibition spaces (Figure 37).
I wanted Monique and Karina’s artworks on the same side as they both used elements relation to nature and focused on black women flourishing in the midst of adversity (Figure 38).
I placed my and Ashley’s artworks on the same side as we both used similar colors and focused on the outlook of black women (Figures 39 & 40).

Figure 39: Ashley’s section of the exhibition (Photo Credit: Mikael Coleman)

Figure 40: Amber’s section of the exhibition (Photo Credit: Mikael Coleman)
I also wanted to use the contemporary museum practice and theory approach of allowing artists to shape and define their own artworks. The label text that accompanied these works resisted traditional labels as I asked for the participants to write poems to explain the meaning behind their works. The participants controlled the explanation of their works of art through another artistic form; they connected power to knowledge by explaining their own work and seeing their thoughts and participation as important.

Another black feminist incorporation of empowerment was the inclusion of our Dear Black Woman Letters as works of art (Figure 41).

*Figure 41: Exhibition visitors reading and writing Dear Black Woman letters (Photo Credit: Mikael Coleman)*

Their inclusion and content were points of empowerment as they gave words of encouragement to black girls and women. I wanted to have these letters placed prominently in the center of the
exhibition along with a space for visitors to create their own letters. As a critical pedagogical approach, the writing of these letters by the participants and visitors allowed us to learn from each other. The visitors became active participants in the collaborative reflection of empowering black women and action for change. I thought about the postmodern approach to contemporary museum practice and theory that advocated for including visitors in the exhibition. While we did present information to the visitors, they too became active participants in our exhibition.

**Visitors’ Response to a Call**

*Fueling Empowerment*

At the end of the exhibition, I found that were over twenty Dear Black Woman letters left in the mailbox. All of the letters were empowering and reflected a personal desire to empower black women (Figure 42).

![Dear Black Woman letter](image)

*Figure 42: One of the visitors’ Dear Black Woman letters*
In one letter, the visitor stated, “We live in a world that attacks us at every angle. Persevere. Good things are your birthright. Joy is your birthright. Never forget the power that lives in you.” Another letter said, “You are strong and beautiful even when you don’t feel it. You are smarter than you’ll ever know even when you don’t think it. You are a light to the world so let that light shine bright.” And yet another visitor wrote, “I want to tell you that your power and beauty is a complex, ever growing treasure that connects you to history, ancestry, family (however you construct it) and future.”

Some visitors even shared their personal experiences in the letters. One visitor wrote, “I grew up in a place of prejudice. I was taught racism by my father- and I never questioned it really. It took coming to college, having a black roommate to open my eyes about this horrible prejudice that I didn't even realize had been instilled in me. I love this work, this exhibit. I'm sorry for who I used to be, but I'm trying every day to not be that person anymore. Thank you to every black woman who faces this world and stays strong. People can change.” Another said, “Since I've been here I've never seen anything like this. It's nice to see our representation; even if it is in and works where we have things constantly going against us, negating our very being. I am a PROUD black woman and urge every other black woman to be the same. It took me a minute to get there. But thank God I made it.”

Other visitors wrote about black women inspiring them and gave them thanks (Figure 43).
One visitor wrote, “You are beautiful. You are human. You are strong and you inspire me. I love you. Be strong.” Another visitor said, “Thank you for always seeing the beauty in me when I couldn't. Thank you for showing me that my abilities, talent, and love has no bounds. Thank you for being my comfort when I felt alone in a crowded room. I love you and I will fight for you with every breath in my soul.” Another stated, “Thank you. Thank you for taking the time to engage with the deepest parts of you and your soul. Thank you for inviting me into your story, to listen, to learn, to appreciate, and to celebrate. Through getting to know you more deeply, I am able to know myself too. Thank you, you've been my childhood playground best friend, my pastor, my sorority sister, my safe haven in pain. You are the strongest women I know. I thank
God that He created you, and I praise Him that every good and perfect thing is His. You are divinely formed, and magical.”

**Thankfulness for the Work**

From reading the commentary book, the visitor’s responses expressed their enjoyment of experiencing the exhibition (Figure 44).

![Figure 44: A visitor’s comment from the exhibition commentary book](image)

They remarked that it was “powerful,” “beautiful,” “touching,” “necessary,” “unique,” “inviting,” “inspirational,” “moving,” “empowering,” “emotional,” “wonderful,” “magical,” “eye-opening,” “refreshing,” and more. One thing that stood out in their remarks was thankfulness for the exhibition. One visitor said, “Everyone should see this exhibit! Thank you for sharing yourselves & your community.” Each response like this expressed their appreciation
for the work there, being able to experience it, and wanting to see it more often. Another visitor stated, “Thank you so much for this exhibit. I came here gaining strength, peace, and inspiration that I didn’t even know I needed. This world needs a little more black girl magic!” Another said, “Thank you so much for this gallery. The inspiring words and poems on the walls made my day & brought me to tears. I truly needed this upliftment today. Thanks for your beautiful pictures and encouragement. #Amazing! #We‘It.”

Many of the comments included support for our efforts, for Black Girl Magic, and other empowering hashtags referencing things from the exhibit and our culture (Figure 45).

Figure 45: Other visitor comments from the commentary book
One visitor wrote, “I loved this! Y’all inspired me GREATLY! It’s very empowering to see work from Black Women like you—the very definition of Black Girl Magic! Thank y’all so much!” Another said, “Wonderful & Empowering! Keep doing what you are doing. This is a beautiful reminder of the importance of all lives.” Some of these comments included hashtags like “#BlackGirlMagic,” “#BlackGirlsRock,” “#StayWoke,” and “#BlackGirlLivesMatter.”

Others talked about how the exhibition added to the atmosphere of the gallery and the University of Georgia. One visitor said, “I love the flavor that you all have added to the striking white walls of this school, and the idea of a show in the art world; your presence is everything!” For the ones who were black women, they expressed what seeing this exhibition at their university meant to them. One visitor wrote, “This really touched my heart. As a black woman at the university, it [sic] rare that you get to experience stuff like this. I am honored and proud to be a black woman. Thank you for sharing!” Thank you so much, keep doing this! We love it!”
Reflections and Recommendations

Participant Involvement

In reflecting on the participants' involvement with this project, I would amend participation opportunities to allow for stronger group connections, collaboration opportunities, and a more even distribution of power between the participants and the facilitator. I believe that one major issue of the project was that the participants did not live in proximity of one another. The work would have been even more collaborative and connected if we had the chance to meet or convene more often altogether. More frequent meetings would have enhanced our discussions as a group about the readings, artworks, and videos.

In the curriculum guide, I would have more planned more opportunities for collaboration between participants. There could have been more facilitation of participant-participant interaction. With more opportunities to meet as a group, we could have done activities like in-progress feedback sessions and critiques. While some of the work was shared in the Google Group, it would have been interesting for participants to have in-depth discussions about their work with the group. The Google Group allowed everyone to see each others’ posts, but it did not ensure that everyone interacted with each other.

Curriculum Guide Activity Improvements

In terms of improving the curriculum guide, I would deem it to be more of a discussion and activity guide, unless it were to be implemented in the classroom. I believe that the guide provided structure along with an ample amount of options, which allowed for variety for participant interpretation. Despite having the structure of the curriculum guide, I would suggest
further incorporating a critical pedagogical approach of doing less facilitation and allowing the participants to also facilitate. I could provide materials and resources, but I would not construct all of the presentations or activities. Everyone involved would construct some of the knowledge being disseminated to the group.

In regard to the specific activities of the curriculum guide, I would suggest several considerations. With the museum visits, I had the opportunity to visit the museums and exhibitions on several occasions while the other participants only visited each site once. While I know that they enjoyed the visits, the experience may have informed their work differently if they had the opportunity to visit the sites more than once. Furthermore, in reflecting on our own exhibition, there are two elements that I would suggest including in the curriculum guide. First, I would consider creating an activity inspired by the inspiration board of positive images and quotes of black women that I created for our own exhibition. In thinking about the inspiration board, I would have had us continued with the intended Pinterest Board activity. I think that it would have been an interesting collaborative project that would outlive the project and could be incorporated into the exhibition. Secondly, although my #BlackGirlsLivesMatter was a last minute piece, I would propose that all of the participants create an artwork from this idea. It would be interesting to see how each person conceptualizes what black girls’ lives mattering in our society meant to them. As collaborative projects, these two activities would allow everyone to choose imagery, text, and other materials that they felt reflected the topics as a way to connect to portraying our Black feminist collective standpoint.

For some of the curriculum guide activities, I would also suggest changes after reflecting on their implementation. For example, while I think that the artist inspiration activity allowed us to think about the artistic styles of African American women artists, I do not think it allowed us
to critically engage with the work. I would suggest including artist research as a portion of this project for participants to learn more about the artists and the work that they created. Not only would the participant emulate the artist’s style, but they would also be able to present information about that artist to the group. For the Change the Frame project, I would recommend that participants create their own frames. While the shadow box frames I selected created a uniformed look in the presentation of the works, I think having individualized frames would emphasize the participants’ ability to shape how they are represented. It would allow the participants to further the Black feminist notion of self-definition.

Additionally, for the Dear Black Woman letters, I initially wanted us to create a series of letters as we worked through the project and possibly send those letters to each other. Although that did not happen, I think it would be interesting to see how our letters would have changed after learning more about Black feminist theory and after receiving them from each other. The letters could have also been used as part of an artwork where each participant included parts of their written letter. This correspondence would act as another form of dialogue. Moreover, in regard to our general art-making throughout the project, I think that the project could be even more visual arts intensive. By doing this, the participants would have to make more pieces of artwork before the exhibition and be able to choose which ones they wanted to include. Having to select works would include them more in the process of curating the exhibition. Finally, I would suggest having in-progress feedback sessions and a critique during the project. Participants would be able to receive feedback from each other, and possibly a working artist, as they created their artworks. In doing feedback sessions and a critique, I think the participants would see themselves more as visual artists and understand art-making better.
Alternative Curation Decisions

Upon reflection of the curation of the exhibition, I would suggest the implementation of more artist/participant curation, educational programming and materials, and visitor participation. In terms of artist/participant curation, I propose that the participants have a larger share in the decision making and organizing of the exhibition. I feel as though my curation of our exhibition was an orchestration of how I thought everything should come together. I think that through collaboration the other participants might have connected the works of the show in a different, yet interesting manner. With their involvement, they would have a better understanding of how to curate, install, and write about an exhibition. For example, in this case, they would have to write more text for the other artworks featured in the show and reach out for donations of artworks by African American women artists for the Food for the Soul section of the exhibition.

In regard to the specific exhibition that we presented, we could have incorporated photographs of our experience of participating in the project so that viewers could have seen our journey toward the exhibition. In addition, I would recommend that all of the participants create take-away items for the Food for the Soul table so that viewers would have more of a personal connection to each of us and the work of the project. Finally, with the music playlist, instead of me curating the list of songs, this could be a collaborative piece where everyone adds songs that reflect their ideas of what it means to be black and female. The music could play continuously for the duration of the exhibition, not just for the opening, to add to the ambiance of the exhibition. The group could extend the playlist to the visitors to add songs as well.

For the educational programming and materials, I believe that programming in addition to the opening reception would have been beneficial for the audience. With more programming, the group could have had involvement with the local community as well as other visitor
engagement opportunities. In this way, visitors would have more understanding of what we did during this project, how we created this exhibition, and what we hoped to share through participating in this project. Programming would allow the audience to further construct their own understanding of the ideas and the works presented. In terms of the educational materials, I think there should have been more items offered on the *Food for the Soul* table. By creating something like a pamphlet, I could have given more information about each of the participants and explained in more detail the work of the project. Also on this table, I would include more information about African American women artists, quotes by these artists, images of their artworks, and their contributions to art history. In addition to these suggestions, I think it would have been interesting to have an online continuation of the Dear Black Woman letters where anyone could write and post one. Although I did post the Dear Black Woman letters that the participants and visitors wrote on a Facebook page, I do not think that it was posted in a manner that would allow the posts to continue.

With curating more visitor participation, the exhibition could have had more opportunities for visitors to become involved in the gallery space. For example, if the Pinterest Board activity had been a part of the exhibition, visitors could have added items that they felt reflected the project topics and shared it with others on Pinterest. In addition to that activity, the Dear Black Woman letters could have been reproduced for visitors to take some encouraging words with them. Furthermore, the visitors could have been asked to catalogue their experience of attending the exhibition and to post their photographs, videos, and responses on social media. Next, I would suggest adding an art-making station where visitors would add to our inspiration board what they thought it meant to be black and female. These activities are examples of ways that visitors could have a part in the exhibition. Finally, I would have included a place for
visitors to take a survey after visiting the exhibition. This would have provided even more feedback about their experience visiting the exhibition and their understanding of our work.

Conclusions

Who teaches you matters. What is taught to you matters. The diversity of art you see in your museums and public art collections matters. It matters which artists are held up as examples for you to emulate. It matters whose visual representations are displayed—and validated—for society at large. It matters who is represented as having agency and who is not. Agency is the ability to assert yourself on your own behalf. This means that students should be actively engaged in pursuing the education they need. It means that artists should be fully involved in shaping the direction of their art and careers. It means that consumers of visual culture should demand access to work that reflects cultural difference and exemplifies social and economic justice. (Klebesadel, 2006, p. 252)

With this project, I wanted to comprehend what could happen around us and within us as we explored black feminism and museums through art. I was curious about how Black feminist theory could act as a location for healing that sense of marginalization and underrepresentation that affects African American women artists. As bell hooks (1994) puts it, this project aimed “to compel folks around me to do things differently, to look at the world differently, using theory as intervention, as a way to challenge the status quo” (p. 59-60) in relation to these topics. I wanted to explore Black feminist theory because I felt that it could help me and the participants make sense of our experiences, since we all identified in some manner as black women.

This project allowed us to possibly find some sanctuary in our lived experiences and to critically think about, reflect on, and analyze these experiences by applying Black feminist, contemporary museum, and critical pedagogical theory to visual arts and museum exhibition practice. Therefore, my facilitation of this project acted as a site of resistance (hooks, 1994, p. 21). In the reciprocal relationship of linking theory to practice, we participated, in what hooks calls, “collective liberation” through theory by connecting to the experiences of being African American women, being African American women artists, and being African American women
artists with artwork in a museum-like space (hooks, 1994). In order to use theory towards healing, revolutionary, and liberatory aims, we had to direct Black feminist theory towards those aims through our engagement with the theory, creation of artwork, and installation of an exhibition for public viewing. hooks (1994) states, “any theory that cannot be shared in everyday conversation cannot be used to educate the public” (p. 64). Through theorizing and critical dialogue, we, as black women, engaged in this intellectual terrain in order to participate in the journey of this project.

This project and the subsequent art exhibition that reflected on our experiences and understandings allowed us to give voice to the elements of Black feminist theory, contemporary museum practice and theory, and critical pedagogy that we had learned about and that inspired us to create and curate artistic work. We looked at the museum as a mass medium that would frame our contemporary use of it as well as our perceptions of the past and future (Martsine, 2011). We also utilized elements from the theories to see where we were in relation to understanding African American women’s art in museums and where we could go by exploring the topics. In hooks’ (1994) text, she connects to Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren when they state that “theory and practice in order to affirm and demonstrate pedagogical practices [engage] in creating a new language, rupturing disciplinary boundaries, decentering authority, and rewriting the institutional and discursive borderlands in which politics [become] a condition for reasserting the relationship between agency, power, and struggle” (p. 129).

Through this project, I wanted people to acknowledge that black women’s lives and experiences matter. Black women should be able to feel affirmed and valued in the society that they live in and time that they occupy. As the Combahee River Collective (1977/1995) states, “If black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our
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freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression” (p. 237). Therefore, in this project, we worked within in a humanist frame where everyone engaged with each other as valued human beings (Witcomb, 2013, p. 267). Black women can utilize art and create exhibitions that address the struggles that the systems of oppression created against them while carving out space to reflect, project, and thrive. As Yokley (1999) states, “learners have opportunity to increase their perception and appreciation of art as a valuable and important part of learning about life” (p. 24). Black women’s shared experiences as content became a determining factor in the form of the work itself and the distinguishing mark for our practices with Black feminist theory. When black women are allowed to frame their narratives based in Black feminist ideology, they provide a context that colors an understanding of representation in museums and how it can be addressed. Marstine (2006) states, “Vergo and the generation of museum theorists that followed were influenced by artists who….proclaimed that all representation is political and who articulated through their work a critique of the museum” (p. 6). Therefore, the representation of African American women’s art in museums is also political and worthy of critique through the critical art-making of black women like that of participants in this project.

Critical dialogue occurred through the group’s creations, my facilitation, and visitors’ responses. The exhibition tied all of this together as a forum of dialogue. The gallery exhibition allowed us to assert that we were not the “Other” in this space, we were merely our “selves” justifying that we, our experiences, and our art belonged in that space (Marstine, 2006). It allowed everyone involved to be active participants in the knowledge that was constructed. We wanted to connect not only people but ideas in order to create new interpretations. Our work links theory and practice with our understanding and experiences of the world to create a critical
praxis (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2017). We created and generated work in the interest of social justice and human empowerment through reflection, dialogue and action, which was illuminated and supplemented by our learning of theory.

Through the exhibition, we fostered a better understanding of black women through the presentation of our art- and meaning-making, but also learned from each other as well as our visitors in the process. We had a say in sharing our experiences and empowering others, as we took the risk to be vulnerable to exhibit our work in this particular space. This exhibition led our audience to consider becoming critical museum visitors who would continue think about the personal and political implications of having the work of African American women in museum spaces (Lindauer, 2006, p. 213). In the end, through the comments and Dear Black Woman letters, we created a space in the exhibition similar to a call and response. We were not just educating the viewers, but learning from them.

During the project and in creating the exhibition, the words that we utilized were an important component of our practice. The words we used allowed us to discuss issues of gender and blackness without censorship. We needed to explore Black feminist theory in order to understand our contemporary positions and how we could engage in resistance that could potentially transform our current reality of a world in which African American women artists are underrepresented in museums. Making Black feminist theory our focus allowed the group to develop “oppositional gazes of resistance and resilience” in regard to the lack of representation of African American women in museums (Jacobs, 2016, p. 234). Our discussions and subsequent actions show how the learning of Black feminist theory as an intervention can be essential to critically analyzing and questioning representation in museums.
Therefore, there is value in utilizing theory that can be shared in a variety of ways. In our case, we found writing, which hooks (1994) deems as “theoretical talk,” to be a useful means of engaging in critical reflection and practicing Black feminism throughout the project. We wanted to enact our understanding of Black feminism in a similar manner as hooks. She states, “this theory emerges from the concrete, from my efforts to make sense of everyday life experiences, from my efforts to intervene critically in my life and the lives of others” (hooks, 1994, p. 70). Through our own experiences during this project, we were able to empower ourselves as well as others.

By learning about the tenets of Black feminist theory and incorporating it in our artwork and exhibition, we disrupted traditional power dynamics in the gallery space while also creating a new way to envision African American women’s art in museums (Jacobs, 2016). In doing this project and the subsequent exhibition, we attempted to give voice to ideas and feelings that black women, and other women of color, have had suppressed and to create a space for change through our thoughts and creations. Our experiences matter and are important to share in our artistic endeavors. As hooks (1994) notes, “Catherine MacKinnon reminds us that ‘we know things with our lives and we live that knowledge, beyond what any theory has yet theorized’” (p. 75). Through theory, our unique gaze, and our creations, we critiqued the representation of African American women’s art in museums while also defining for ourselves the importance of representing our experiences and artistic expressions. With Black feminist theory as a tool, we not only defined ourselves in the gallery space, but promoted positive perspectives of African American women’s art for our visitors.

In knowing that the participants in this project were college educated, it would be easy to assume that our educational privileges would have already exposed us to an education that
prioritized and included our experiences as black women. However, it was through the Black feminist agenda of this project that we were exposed to the cultural literacy of understanding black women’s experiences through Black feminist theory. This project was about speaking to ourselves as black women, connecting our understanding of other black women to theory, and sharing our experience with our audience through our artwork. Ultimately, the exhibition spoke for itself. We accomplished this through our multiple dialogues about representation and by “reading our lives” (Gist, 2016) through our artworks in a way that our audience would understand and respond to as evidenced through the Dear Black Woman letters and comments.

Through critical theory, we used the project’s activities to support creating valuable changes around the representation of African American women in museums. Through reading, writing, art-making, and curation, we were able to convey our ideas and foster critical and creative thinking; we were successful in completing our individual artistic endeavors while collectively rejecting the norms around representation of African American women’s art (hooks, 1984). Can African American women artists be “reinserted” into the museum’s politics of representation in a manner that empowers them? The lack of African American women’s presence in museums was not due to the lack of their existence. It was due to the lack of exhibiting and an understanding of African American women artists. Without exposure to the work of African American women artists, “people merely seek the right labels, seek out the works by the artists they have heard they should see” (Greene, 1995, p. 125).

When my participants were given the opportunity to understand themselves as artists and exhibit their own work in spaces that legitimize the necessity of their representation, they saw themselves as included and valued in museum narratives. Through critical pedagogy, the participants in this project also taught each other. We were committed to centering our
experiences and understandings during the project. We created critical dialogue about ourselves through comparative, relational, and responsive engagement with Black feminist theory and African American women’s art and museums in our exhibition. Our exhibition was a medium of seeing a portion of the real “world imaginatively and entering it perceptually, affectively, and cognitively” (Greene, 1995, p. 125). Through our exhibition, the participants’ artworks spoke in their voices to tell their stories, experiences, and understandings. The artworks were a reflection of “self-reflectiveness originating in situated life, the life of persons in their plurality, open to one another in their distinctive locations, engaging with one another in dialogue” (Greene, 1995, p. 126). By implementing some aspects from contemporary museum practice and theory, the exhibition was a way of seeing how our collection of responses to Black feminist theory and the representation of African American women’s art in museums would work in a gallery space. We were aware that our work was being presented in this space, but did not, initially, realize the dialogue that would result from its presence. Neither did we anticipate how this body of artwork would affect people’s perceptions of having black women’s narratives represented in this gallery space. The artworks in this exhibition acted as social objects that sparked dialogue, connected the people who created the work with those who were viewing it, and allowed for exchange between the artists and the audience (Simon, 2010).

The exhibition allowed us to understand the experiences of African American women artists by connecting to the critical ideological framework of black feminist theory, contemporary museum practice and theory, and critical pedagogy. The exhibition acted as an extension of these critical thoughts and as a text that allowed us to see how our project activities could be curated into something meaningful. In my opinion, one of the most satisfying things about this project was the connection between research, scholarship, and real world experiences.
The experiences of this project were strong “transactions with our environment that situate us in time and space” (Greene, 1995, p. 130). The project I organized with the participants pointed to the very strong links between conceptual practices and the politics of representation in our contemporary times in a way that shows the necessity of this work.

Black feminist theory is a useful and relevant tool when examining and taking action for the representation of African American women’s art in museums. This theory affords its learners the opportunity to listen to black women’s voices and act on their behalf while also extending empowerment to others. There is a need for Black feminist theory to be incorporated in art and museum education as well as exhibition practices. Deepwell (2006) states, “to avoid marginalization, women artists’ exhibitions need to be polemical and informed by feminism, yet they must also reassess not just women’s presence as artists but their contribution to art itself” (p. 79). The same should happen for black women and Black feminism. There is a need for Black feminist art educational projects, art-making, and exhibitions like our project. The continued lack of representation of African American women in museums demands contemplation when we think about societal and educational norms. Implementing Black feminist theory, contemporary museum practice and theory, and critical pedagogy in art education shows how topics like the representation of African American women’s art can be taught, discussed, and adopted as a social justice initiative. These three theories are critical in their approach to advocating for marginalized groups and narratives in our society. This project was intended to show the interconnected use of these theories in an art/museum educational setting. It was an attempt to show how marginalized groups can be prioritized by implementing critical theories in art education. By implementing a project like this, we can revise narratives in museums by connecting to critical theories.
Everyone benefits from recognizing the artistic endeavors of marginalized groups like black women whose works and representation are acts of resistance to dominant power structures in museums and education. Exhibiting works by African American women artists present opportunities to educate and inspire black women as well as others. Dewey (1934) states, “The work of art is complete only as it works in the experience of others than the one who created it” (p. 110). Being able to identify with people who look like you or empathize with people who do not look like you in cultural institutions like museums can influence how people view and understand art. Therefore, art bridges the gap between the artist and the audience. Including diverse and underrepresented narratives within museums is important and informs how we educate the public on who is valued in our society.

By infusing art education with critical theories, we can view art as a means of “Communication [which is] the process of creating participation, of making common what had been isolated and singular; and part of the miracle it achieves is that, in being communicated, the conveyance of meaning gives body and definiteness to the experience of the one who utters as well as to that of those who listen” (Dewey, 1934, p. 253). We are able to think about what is being communicated about African American women through their representation in museums.

Museums are a space that connect between power and representation, and therefore, representation and empowerment. It is important to remember that “the art world is a constructed world, and therefore we must remember to view it as contingent and always open to critique. We must regard it as always open to expansion and revision” (Greene, 1995, p. 136). African American women’s art should be better represented in cultural institutions like museums. This project addresses representation in museums as a form of activism. Museums can be a space for black women to contemplate their ways of seeing and being. Greene (1995) states that museums,
“may, now and then, move us into spaces where we can envision other ways of being and ponder what it might signify to realize them” (p. 135). By incorporating critical theories like Black feminist theory, contemporary museum practice and theory, and critical pedagogy in art education, we demonstrate how the representation of African American women’s art in museums should be normalized. Adichie (2014/2015) states, “If we do something over and over again, it becomes normal. If we see the same over and over again, it becomes normal” (p. 13).

**Implications**

Black feminist theory can be powerful for black women to learn more about themselves. As black women, we can use theory as social practice to speak, break silence, and engage in debate about our experiences in relation to these topics (hooks, 1994). Black women are made often to see ourselves as the “Other” in dominant discourses and we have to create our own affirming contexts and ways of looking and seeing to perpetuate our value (hooks, 1992/2015, p. 3). Creating these affirming contexts and ways of looking and seeing in museums can be accomplished by implementing contemporary museum practice and theory. Utilizing this theory allows for black women to engage in artistic acts of resistance and to have a voice in spaces that were not meant for them to speak. This resistance is important, especially when the voices of black women, and women of color are not fully listened to or included because of claims that our work is not theoretical enough (hooks, 1994). Art and museum educators must recognize their role in supporting diverse groups in questioning narratives and representations present in museums. As hooks (1992/2015) states, black women as “intellectuals and/or artists are looking at new ways to write and talk about race and representation, working to transform the image” (p. 2). Museums, and other exhibition spaces, can be transformative spaces that subvert dominant societal norms of inequality around gender and race. These spaces can foster liberation and
critical inquiry through the implementation and incorporation of contemporary museum practice and theory and critical pedagogy (Jacobs, 2016).


APPENDIX A: INITIAL CURRICULUM GUIDE

Curriculum Guide

1. **Photo Collage Project**
   a. Participants will take pictures throughout the course of the project to create a photo collage
      i. The photo collage will act as a chronicle of the group’s experiences from the first meeting to the exhibition

2. **Dear Black Woman Letter**
   a. The group will create a visual letter in which you will write words of encouragement and/or draw designs/images to empower yourselves and other Black women
   b. Each woman will add their input to the letter and reflect on their identity as Black women
      i. Think about what you would say to yourself
      ii. Think about what you would want to say to other Black women in your life
      iii. Think about things that you would say to young Black girls
      iv. What are some things that have made a difference in your life as a Black woman

3. **Introduction to the Georgia Museum of Art**
   a. A PowerPoint Presentation on the Georgia Museum of Art and the exhibition, “Expanding Tradition: Selections from the Larry D. and Brenda A. Thompson Collection” will be sent out early in the week for participants to review
      i. Participants will receive a presentation with information about the Georgia Museum of Art and some background on the particular exhibit that they will visit

4. **Visit to the Georgia Museum of Art (Athens, GA)**
   a. **Reception of Visual Journals**
      i. Participants will receive their visual journals for use throughout the project
         1. Participants will be expected to have at least one journal entry per week
   b. **Gallery Activities**
      i. **Gallery Talk/Tour**
         1. **Letter from exhibition curator, Dr. Shawnya Harris**
            a. Participants will receive a letter from Dr. Harris about her position, working at the Georgia Museum of Art, and this particular exhibition
ii. **Walk-Through the Museum**
   1. Participants will take time to walk through the museum as well as the exhibit of interest, “Expanding Tradition”

iii. **Gallery Sketching, Photos, and Note-Taking**
   1. Participants will document things of interest as they visit the museum to inform their future art-making

iv. **Writing Activity: Artwork Point of View Poem**
   1. Participants will choose an artwork of their choice to think about as they write a poem from the artworks’ point of view

v. **Artwork of Interest**
   1. Participants will take a picture with an artwork of their choice

c. **Studio Activity at the Museum or Lamar Dodd School of Art**
   i. **Meeting with an art professor from the Lamar Dodd School of Art**
      1. An art professor will come to meet and show the participants about different art materials and techniques
   
  ii. **Experimentation with Art-Making Materials**
       1. Participants will have a chance to work with various art materials, work in their visual journal, and create a piece to take home with them
   
  iii. **Before participants leave, a photo will be taken of them for a later project**

d. **Participants who cannot visit the GMOA will visit a museum in their local area and participate in the same activities**

e. **Visual Journal Entry #1 & 2**
   i. **GMOA/Museum Reflection**
      1. Participants will create a journal entry about their experiences while at the museum and during the studio activity
         a. Participants should consider the space of the museum as a whole in relation to the space of the exhibit, as well as the context of the museum
   
   ii. **Visual Journal Prompt**
      1. Participants will consider how they see themselves reflected in this exhibit and how the artworks they saw reflect aspects of their lives
      2. Participants will consider the following questions
         a. How were Black women represented in the exhibit?
         b. How did the artworks fit within the particular museum space?
         c. What elements did you find were related to identity and your experiences?

5. **Introduction to the Spelman Museum of Fine Art**
ENGAGING BLACK WOMEN IN CRITICAL DIALOGUE

a. A PowerPoint Presentation on the Spelman Museum of Fine Art and the exhibition, “Mickalene Thomas: Mentors, Muses, and Celebrities” will be sent out earlier in the week for participants to review
   i. Participants will receive a presentation with information about the Spelman Museum of Fine Art and some background on the particular exhibit that they will visit

6. Visit to the Spelman Museum of Fine Art (Atlanta, GA)
   a. Gallery Activities
      i. Gallery Talk/Tour
         1. Meet with Curator of Education, Makeba Dixon-Hill
            a. Participants will have a chance to talk with Makeba about her position, working at the Spelman Museum of Fine Art, and this particular exhibition
      ii. Walk-Through the Museum
         1. Participants will take time to walk through the museum as well as the exhibit of interest, “Mickalene Thomas”
      iii. Gallery Sketching, Photos, and Note-Taking
         1. Participants will document things of interest as they visit the museum to inform their future art-making
      iv. Writing Activity: Rewrite an Artwork Label
         1. Participants will rewrite (or create, if tombstone) a label based on their observations of the work
      v. Artwork of Interest
         1. Participants will take a picture with an artwork of their choice
   b. Visit to BLICK Art Materials and Take Home Art-Making
      i. Take home experimentation with art-making materials
         1. Participants will visit an art store and look for some materials to take home and work with in their visual journal
         2. Participants should create an artwork on their own reflecting their experiences at the two museums and the connections they found between the exhibitions of African American artwork
      ii. Art-Making Activity: Change the Frame
         1. Participants will take the photograph that they took from the first activity and alter the image to change its frame of reference
         2. Participants will keep the following questions in mind
            a. How do you want to be represented?
            b. What elements (words, images, designs) will you use to “frame” your image?
            c. What is important about your image?
            d. What do you want your focus to be?
c. Participants who cannot visit Spelman will visit a museum in their local area and participate in the same activities
d. Visual Journal Entry #3 & 4
   i. Spelman/Museum Reflection
      1. Participants will write a few sentences about their experiences while at the museum and their visit to the art store
   ii. Visual Journal Prompt
      1. Participants will consider how they see themselves reflected in this exhibit and how the artworks they saw reflect aspects of their lives
      2. Participants will consider the following questions
         a. How were Black women represented in the exhibit?
         b. How did the artworks fit within the particular museum space?
         c. What elements did you find were related to identity and your experiences?

7. Artist Inspiration Project
   a. Participants will create a work inspired by an artist that they saw during their museum visits or an artist that they find on their own
      i. Participants will make sure to reference a topic, technique, material, or other element that is characteristic of the artist’s work

   a. A PowerPoint Presentation of an Overview of Black Feminist Theory and the History of Modern African American Art
      i. Participants will receive a presentation with information about Black Feminist Theory, and modern African American art history, art criticism, aesthetics, and art-making
   b. Two Readings that are relevant from Black feminist theory literature and African American art history
      i. Participants will be given a selection of readings from Black feminist theory literature and African American art history
   c. Discussion Board #1 (FaceBook Group or Google Group)
      i. Participants will answer the following questions
         1. What aspect from Black feminist theory resonates with you the most?
         2. How do you conceptualize this informing the artwork you have seen and the artwork you will make?
   d. Discussion Board #2
      i. Participants will answer the following questions
         1. What aspect from these African American women’s artworks resonates with you the most?
ENGAGING BLACK WOMEN IN CRITICAL DIALOGUE

2. How do you see your experiences in relation to that in the art of these African American women artists from pre-modern times?

e. **Art-Making Activity: Pinterest Board**
   i. Participants will start a Pinterest Board for compiling points of interest from their experiences during the project to inform their art-making

   a. **A PowerPoint Presentation on contemporary museum theory and practice**
      i. Participants will receive a presentation with information about contemporary museum theory and practice, and contemporary African American art history, art criticism, aesthetics, and art-making
   b. **Two Readings that are relevant to museum theory and practice and African American art history**
      i. Participants will be given a selection of readings from contemporary museum theory and practice literature and African American art history
   c. **Discussion Board #3**
      i. Participants will answer the following questions
         1. What aspect from contemporary museum theory and practice resonates with you the most?
         2. How do these strategies and practices affect your opinion on experiences that occur in museums?
   d. **Discussion Board #4**
      i. Participants will answer the following questions
         1. What aspect from these African American women’s artworks resonates with you the most?
         2. How do you see your experiences in relation to that in the art of these African American women artists from modern and contemporary times?
   e. **Art-Making Activity: Art History Project**
      i. Participants will take one aspect of art history, art criticism, aesthetics, or art-making of African American women artists and incorporate it into a work of art

10. **Art-Making**
   a. **Visual Journal Entry #5**
      i. Participants will consider the following questions as they work toward creating their artworks
         1. How did the project allow us to explore how we see ourselves as Black women in the world and in art?
         2. What aspects about our experiences as Black women do we want represented and exhibited?
3. What do I want to say about myself and this project through my artwork?
4. How do I want my voice, knowledge, and experiences to be valued?
5. What concepts from the project did I find relevant in informing my artmaking?

b. Participants will take time to reflect on the activities thus far to inform their art-making decisions for at least one artwork
   i. Participants will discuss their art-making plans, advice, and intentions
      1. Participants will create artworks addressing the connections between Black feminist theory, African American women’s art, and contemporary museum theory and practice
      2. Participants will also begin writing their artist statements to accompany their works

11. Exhibition Planning and Curating
   a. Discussion for Exhibition Design and Implementation
      i. Participants will consider the following questions as the group works toward their exhibition
         1. What is the vision for what our exhibit will look like?
         2. What ideas link our works together?
         3. Which works do we feel best represent our exploration and understanding of the topic of the project?
      ii. Participants will use either 3-D virtual exhibit software or another program to think about how to organize their works for the exhibit

   b. Collaboration on Exhibition Execution
      i. Participants will consider the following questions as the group collaborated on their exhibition execution
         1. How do we as a group want our work to curated?
         2. How do we want to present our ideas and artwork?
         3. How do we want the work to be explained and described?

   a. Participants will have an exhibition and opening reception of their work from the completion of the project
      i. Participants will host an exhibition of their artwork at the Lamar Dodd School of Art in the 3rd Floor Gallery Suite
      ii. Participants will have their opening reception on October 12th at 5-7 pm
APPENDIX B: APPLIED PROJECT OVERVIEW GIVEN TO PARTICIPANTS

Project Overview

❖ Photo Collage Project (end of August 2017)
❖ Introduction to the Georgia Museum of Art
❖ Visit to the Georgia Museum of Art (Athens, GA)
  ➢ Visual Journal Reception
  ➢ Gallery Activities
  ➢ Studio Activity at the Museum or Lamar Dodd School of Art
  ➢ Visual Journal Entries #1 & 2
❖ Introduction to the Spelman Museum of Fine Art
❖ Visit to the Spelman Museum of Fine Art (Atlanta, GA)
  ➢ Gallery Activities
  ➢ Gallery Talk/Tour with Curator of Education, Makeba Dixon-Hill
  ➢ Visit to BLICK Art Materials and Take Home Art-Making
  ➢ Visual Journal Entries #3 & 4
❖ Artist Inspiration Project
  The above activities (except for the Photo Collage) should be completed by the end of June!
❖ An Overview of Black Feminist Theory and African American Art History
  ➢ A PowerPoint Presentation and Two Readings
  ➢ Discussion Board #1 & 2 (FaceBook Group or GroupMe)
  ➢ Art-Making Activity: Pinterest Board
❖ An Overview of Contemporary Museum Practice, and Modern/Contemporary African American Art History
  ➢ A PowerPoint Presentation and Two Readings
  ➢ Discussion Board #3 & 4
  ➢ Art-Making Activity: Art History Artwork
  The above activities should be completed by the end of July!
❖ Art-Making
  ➢ Visual Journal Entry #5
  All Artworks should be completed by the end of August!
❖ Exhibition Planning and Curating
  ➢ Discussion for Exhibition Design and Implementation
  ➢ Collaboration on Exhibition Execution
❖ Exhibition of Artwork (October 12-November 10, 2017)
  ➢ Reception on October 12th from 5-7 pm

Notes
❖ The only meeting dates are the two museum visits and the opening reception
  ➢ If you all want to meet again before the exhibition opening, we can arrange that
❖ All of the other activities can be done at-home at your own pace
➢ There may be two dates responses and activities must be completed
❖ All materials (journals, readings, PowerPoints, etc.) will be provided for you, except for your choice of art-making materials
➢ There may be some materials that I can provide for you from the art department
➢ Readings will either summaries of what I have read or short excerpts
❖ All dates are suggested and will be flexible based on your needs
APPENDIX C: PROJECT AND FIRST MUSEUM VISIT OVERVIEW FOR THE GEORGIA MUSEUM OF ART

Project Overview for First Museum Visit

These will be the first activities of the project for those attending the Georgia Museum of Art Visit. Here are descriptions of each of the activities. You will have one month to complete all of these activities. Please try to finish the activities by the designated date above.

- **Photographs of Participants**
  - You will send me a headshot of yourself for the Change the Frame activity that we will do at a later date

- **Photo Collage Project (Long-Term Project)**
  - Begin to take pictures through the course of the project to create a photo collage for the exhibition
    - This includes photos of you visiting museums, working on the activities, and making art-work
    - The photo collage will act as a chronicle of the group’s experiences from the first meeting and activities to the exhibition
  - I will compile the photos once we reach the end of the project

- **Dear Black Woman: A Visual Letter (Long-Term Project)**
  - I will give the group a prompt to start this activity at the group meeting at the Georgia Museum of Art
  - This group will start the visual letter
    - They will write words of encouragement and/or draw designs/images to empower themselves and other Black women
    - Each woman will add their input to the letter and reflect on their identity as Black women
      - Think about what you would say to yourself
      - Think about what you would want to say to other Black women in your life
      - Think about things that you would say to young Black girls
      - What are some things that have made a difference in your life as a Black woman
  - Their letters will be sent to the group who is not attending the Atlanta/Athens museum visits
● Reception of Visual Journals
  ● You will receive your visual journals and some journaling materials for use throughout the project
    ■ Those attending the museum visits to GMOA and Spelman will receive their visual journals when they meet at the Georgia Museum of Art
    ■ You will be expected to have entries that reflect on your museum visits, things that you have learned or found interesting, and show your intentions for art-making

● The First Museum Visit
  ● Introduction to the Georgia Museum of Art (First Week of May)
    ■ Everyone will receive a PowerPoint presentation on the Georgia Museum of Art and the exhibition, “Expanding Tradition: Selections from the Larry D. and Brenda A. Thompson Collection”
      ● You will receive a presentation with information about the Georgia Museum of Art and some background on the exhibit
      ● This information will primarily be for those who will attend this particular visit
  
  ● Visit to the Georgia Museum of Art (Athens, GA) (May 5 & 6)
    ■ Letter from exhibition curator, Dr. Shawnya Harris
      ● I will provide a letter from Dr. Harris about her position, working at the Georgia Museum of Art, and curating this exhibition

  ● Gallery Activities
    ● Walk-Through the Museum
      ● We will take time to walk through the museum as well as the exhibit of interest, “Expanding Tradition”
    ● Gallery Sketching, Photos, and Note-Taking
      ● You will have time to document things of interest in your visual journals and on your phones during the museum visit to inform your future art-making
    ● Artwork of Interest
      ● You will also take a photo with your favorite work from the exhibition for the Photo Collage
  
  ● Writing Activity: Artwork Point of View Poem
● You will choose an artwork of their choice in *Expanding Tradition* to write a poem from the artwork’s point of view

● **Studio Activity at the Lamar Dodd School of Art**
  ■ **Visiting the Exhibition Space**
    ● You will have a chance to visit the space where the exhibition will occur
  ■ **Experimentation with Art-Making Materials**
    ● You will experiment with various art materials and work in your visual journals in one of the art education classrooms

● **Visual Journal Entries #1 & 2**
  ■ **GMOA Reflection**
    ● You will create a journal entry about your experiences while at the museum and during the studio activity
      ● You should consider the space of the museum as a whole in relation to the space of the exhibit, as well as the context of the museum
  ■ **Visual Journal Prompt**
    ● Consider how you see yourself reflected in this exhibit and how the artworks you saw reflect aspects of your life
    ● Consider the following questions
      ● How were Black women represented in the exhibit?
      ● How did the artworks fit within the particular museum space?
      ● What elements did you find were related to identity and your experiences?

● **Possible Additional Activity**
  ● “*My Mother Said*” or “*Things Black Women Have Told Me*”
    ■ A part of this project is creating dialogue and thinking about dialogues in reference to Black women’s art and experiences
    ■ This activity would allow the group to think about and discuss their connections with other Black women and/or their mothers (Black women)
    ■ We will talk about this activity at the first meeting to see if the group is interested in going forward with it
Appendix D: Slide Presentation about the Georgia Museum of Art and Expanding Tradition

**Georgia Museum of Art**

*Expanding Tradition: Selections from the Larry D. and Brenda A. Thompson Collection*

**Introduction to Expanding Tradition**
- This exhibition and accompanying catalogue present 36 works of African American art from the Thompson Collection.
- This accompanies the dedication of the Thompson Endowment to fund, expand, and research the collection.
- In 2013, the Thompsons donated 100 artworks to the Museum.
- Among the works are many pieces by contemporary artists.
- The exhibition includes works by 15 artists, organized by the David C. Driskell Center for the Study of the Visual Arts and Cultures of African Americans and the African Diaspora at the University of Maryland, College Park.
- This exhibit represents a small cross-section of the Thompson Collection and their commitment to collecting art over the past few decades.

**Early Pioneers**
- Early African American artists were the first to challenge the status quo and create their own traditions.
- They broke through barriers and created new opportunities for themselves and their work.

**Figurative and Abstraction**
- Figurative and Abstraction covers the time after World War II.
- African American artists turned towards looking for artistic freedom and racial identity.

**Contemporary Visions**
- Contemporary Visions covers the twenty-first century postwar break with the twentieth-century traditions.
- African American artists began to look back toward figurative work in order to rethink the past and the present.
- These artists reflect on a new sense of contradiction and new unconventional art-making methods.
- They also utilized new media through photography and mixed media to create new meanings.

**About the Collectors**
- Larry and Brenda Thompson are African American collectors whose works of art by African American artists are presented in this exhibition.
- Larry Thompson has been a visiting professor at 50 art museums, and a partner in the law and auditing firm in arts, and is the former deputy attorney general for the U.S.
- Brenda Thompson has been on the board of trustees for the Barnes Foundation and the board of the Clark Atlanta University Art Gallery.
- They began collecting when they lived in Atlanta where Larry was starting his career.
- This exhibition is a celebration of how their collection is an important resource for the future.
- This exhibition is a great way to learn about African American art and its history.

**Acknowledgments**
- The Georgia Museum of Art wishes to thank the University of Georgia for their support.
- They are grateful for the contributions of all artists, both past and present.
ENGAGING BLACK WOMEN IN CRITICAL DIALOGUE

Rose Piper: Young Women Blues
Oil on canvas (ca. 1957)
- Rose Piper was a pioneering black artist known for her early work.
- She studied at Howard University and later at the Art Students League.
- Her work was influenced by the Harlem Renaissance and the New Deal.
- Piper's paintings often depicted the struggles of black women.

Charles Ethan Porter: Still Life with Beaux
Oil on canvas (1894)
- Porter was one of the first African Americans to study and work at the National Academy of Design in New York.
- His work was exhibited at the National Academy of Design and the Society of American Artists.
- Porter's paintings often depicted still lifes and portraits of his family.

William Edouard Scott: Human Field
Oil on canvas (1924)
- Scott was a prominent artist who studied at the Art Institute of Chicago.
- He was one of the first African American artists to gain national attention.
- Scott's paintings often depicted urban life and the struggle of black people.

Hale Woodruff: Drums on a Mule
Gouache on paper (1940)
- Woodruff was a prominent artist who studied at the Art Institute of Chicago.
- He was one of the first African American artists to gain national attention.
- Woodruff's paintings often depicted urban life and the struggle of black people.

Patsey Dudley: Pool Balcony
Graffiti: Inner tubes and rope (2008)
- Dudley was a prominent artist known for her urban graffiti art.
- Her work often depicted the struggles of black women.
- Dudley's art was influenced by the street art scene.

Legacy Centre: Cleopatra
Bicycle inner tubes and rope (1989)
- The artist was known for her use of everyday materials in her art.
- Her work often depicted the struggles of black women.
- The use of rope and inner tubes in her art was a nod to the history of the civil rights movement.
APPENDIX F: PROJECT AND SECOND MUSEUM VISIT OVERVIEW FOR THE SPELMAN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF FINE ART

Project Overview For Second Museum Visit

These will be the activities for the second museum visit of the project. Here are descriptions of the activities. Please try to finish the activities by the designated date.

❖ The Second Museum Visit
  o Visit to the Spelman Museum of Fine Art
    ▪ Those who are visiting the exhibition at the Spelman Museum of Fine Art will do the following activities
  o Gallery Activities
    ▪ Gallery Talk with Curator of Education, Makeba Dixon-Hill
      ● You will have a chance to meet and talk with the Curator of Education of the Spelman Museum of Fine Art about her position, the focus of the museum, and working with African American women’s art in museum spaces
    ▪ Walk-Through the Museum
      ● Take time to walk through the museum and see the exhibition, “Mickalene Thomas: Mentors, Muses, and Celebrities”
    ▪ Gallery Sketching, Photos, and Note-Taking
      ● Take time to document things of interest in your visual journals and on your phones during the museum visit to inform your future art-making
      ● Artwork of Interest
        o Take a photo with your favorite work from the museum for the Photo Collage
    ▪ Writing Activity: Rewrite an Artwork Label
      ● You will choose an artwork of your choice in the museum to rewrite a label based on your observation of the work; if the artwork does not have a label describing the work, create one for it
 ❖ Visit to Blick Art Materials Store and Take Home Art-Making
  o Take home experimentation with art-making materials
    ▪ You will visit Blick and look for some materials to take home and work with in their visual journal
    ▪ You should create an artwork on your own reflecting their experiences at the two museums, the connections you found, and anything of interest relating African American artwork in your visual journal
 ❖ Art-Making Activity: Change the Frame
  o You will take the large scale headshot that I will give you and alter the image to change its frame of reference
You will keep the following questions in mind

▪ How do you want to be represented?
▪ What elements (words, images, designs) will you use to “frame” your image?
▪ What is important about your image?
▪ What do you want your focus to be?

❖ Visual Journal Entry #3 & 4

 o Museum Visit Reflection
   ▪ You will write a few sentences about your experiences while at the museum and your visit to the art store

 o Visual Journal Prompt
   ▪ You will consider how you see yourself reflected in the museum and how the artworks you saw reflect aspects of your life
   ▪ You will consider the following questions
     ● How were Black women represented in the museum?
     ● How did the artworks fit within the particular museum space?
     ● What elements did you find were related to identity and your experiences?

❖ Artist Inspiration Project

 o You will create a work inspired by an artist that you saw during your museum visits or a Black woman artist that you find on your own
 o I will also provide a list of artists for you to explore
 o You will also make sure to reference a topic, technique, material, or other element that is characteristic of the artist’s work
APPENDIX G: SLIDE PRESENTATION ABOUT THE SPELMAN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF FINE ART AND MICKALENE THOMAS EXHIBITION
APPENDIX H: EXHIBITION BROCHURE AND RESOURCE LINKS FOR THE MICKALENE THOMAS EXHIBITION

Mickalene Thomas Articles and Videos

Here are some resources from the Speelman Museum of Fine Art on Mickalene Thomas. A brochure of the exhibition is attached.

Studio visit and interview with Mickalene Thomas where she provides insight about her work in portraiture: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ii2UKAfVvVs

In "The Perks of Being a Late Bloomer," Mickalene talks about her introduction to the art world: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQdDFVF08nJ

In an interview with Sean Landers, Mickalene Thomas talks about the influence of Carrie Mae Weems and her introduction to art: http://bombmagazine.org/article/5105/mickalene-©-thomas

Mickalene Thomas talks about her photographic muses beginning with herself and her mother: http://www.vogue.com/13385037/mickalene-©-thomas-©-muse-©-aperture/

Mickalene talks about her show "Mickalene Thomas: Mentors, Muses, and Celebrities" at the Aspen Art Museum and her inspiration for the show: http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/mickalene-©-thomas/#

Mickalene Thomas Articles and Videos

Here are some resources from the Speelman Museum of Fine Art on Mickalene Thomas. A brochure of the exhibition is attached.

Studio visit and interview with Mickalene Thomas where she provides insight about her work in portraiture: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ii2UKAfVvVs

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Mickalene talks about her show "Mickalene Thomas: Mentors, Muses, and Celebrities" at the Aspen Art Museum and her inspiration for the show: http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/mickalene-©-thomas/#

The Speelman College Museum of Fine Art is proud to present Mickalene Thomas: Mentors, Muses, and Celebrities, an exhibition featuring new work by Mickalene Thomas, as a highlight of its 30th anniversary. For over ten years, Mickalene Thomas (b. 1975) has produced stunningly eclectic, and emotionally intense paintings, photographs, collages, films, and installations. Her vividly colored portraits of family, friends, towns, and celebrities are an enduring and popular cultural relic, creating a space for the representation of the Black female body as a site of vulnerability, resistance, power, and self-determination.

Mickalene Thomas: Mentors, Muses, and Celebrities, featuring photographs, monoprinted portraits, films, videos, and site-specific installations, explores the theme of gender, race, sexuality, and desire. College — the incorporation and inhabitation of disparate forms and materials, often associated or found in every part of the world — gives Thomas’ work a sense of identity, loaded with the power of art and storytelling. The exhibition is presented in association with the Aspen Art Museum and is curated by Courtney Finn and organized by the Aspen Art Museum.
List of Black Women Artists

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<tr>
<th>Elizabeth Catlett</th>
<th>Valerie Maynard</th>
<th>Simone Leigh</th>
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<td>Amalia Amaki</td>
<td>Harriet Powers</td>
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<td>Clarissa Sligh</td>
<td>Robinson</td>
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Overview of Black Feminist Theory

❖ PowerPoint Presentation on Black Feminist Theory (Google Drive)
❖ Readings from Black Feminist Theory (Google Drive)
  ➢ Readings from 4 Black feminist theory texts (1 from each text), which include:
    ■ Words of Fire by Beverly Guy-Sheftall
    ■ Bad Feminist by Roxane Gay
    ■ Sister Outsider by Audre Lorde
    ■ Black Feminist Thought by Patricia Hill Collins
    ■ Link to Google Drive folder: https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B_q7bQ0N3WoicjhuYjJ6VEhXM00
  ➢ Questions for the Readings
    ■ What aspects from these Black feminist theory texts resonates with you the most?
    ■ How do these texts shape or add to your understanding of Black womanhood and Black feminist theory?
    ■ How do you conceptualize these readings informing the artwork you have seen and the artwork you will make?
❖ Movie/TV Show Suggestions
  ➢ Watch a movie or tv show from this list, or of your choice, where Black women played in the leading roles
  ➢ Movies
    ■ The Color Purple
    ■ Set It Off
    ■ Their Eyes Were Watching God
    ■ Pariah
    ■ Love and Basketball
    ■ I Will Follow
    ■ Eve’s Bayou
    ■ Bessie
    ■ The Wiz
    ■ Brown Sugar
    ■ Crooklyn
    ■ Cleopatra Jones
    ■ Love Jones
    ■ Beloved
    ■ Mahogany
    ■ Beasts of the Southern Wild
    ■ Daughters of the Dust
    ■ Waiting to Exhale
    ■ Carmen Jones
    ■ Lady Sings the Blues
    ■ 12 Years a Slave
    ■ What’s Love Got to Do With It?
    ■ Something New
    ■ The Women of Brewster Place
    ■ Yelling to the Sky
    ■ Girlhood
    ■ The Preacher’s Wife
    ■ The Secret Life of Bees
    ■ Poetic Justice
    ■ How Stella Got Her Groove Back
    ■ Hidden Figures
    ■ Dreamgirls
    ■ The Help
    ■ Southside with You
ENGAGING BLACK WOMEN IN CRITICAL DIALOGUE

- Queen of Katwe
- The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks
- Confirmation
- Loving

➢ TV Shows
- Scandal
- Empire
- Girlfriends
- How to Get Away with Murder
- Insecure
- Queen Sugar
- Greenleaf
- Being Mary Jane
- Middle of Nowhere
- The Proud Family
- Sister Sister
- Living Single
- A Different World
- Orange is the New Black
- Blackish
- Atlanta
- Underground
- Chewing Gum
- K.C. Undercover
- Pitch
- The Breaks
- Survivor’s Remorse
- That’s So Raven
- Moesha
- Doc McStuffins
- The Game
- One on One
- Still Star Crossed
- Shots Fired
- Loosely Exactly Nicole

➢ Questions for the Movie/TV Show
- Think about and comment on the depictions of these Black women and how it relates to your life/identification as a Black woman or with Black female experiences

❖ Videos about Black Feminism
➢ Check out 2-3 of these videos on Black feminism, feminism, Black women’s issues, and other related topics that are of interest to you

➢ Questions for the Videos
- Comment with your thoughts on the videos that you watched and how they impacted you ideas about Black feminist theory and other related issues that were addressed

➢ List of Videos
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie TED Talk (We Should All Be Feminists) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc
- Helen Kassa TED Talk (Bring Out Your Inner Black Woman) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOEXk-XCnEc
- bell hooks: “This ain’t no pussy shit” from The New School https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hb5kteC3UEk&t=1721s
- Janelle Monae’s Message to Black Women: “We Are Not Receptacles….We Birthed This Nation” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lg8jGCab-0I
- Viola Davis Gives Empowering Speech at 2017 Time 100 Gala “You Survived It” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvNHvdDUIQ0
Aja Naomi King Shares Her Battle With Self-Doubt In Moving Speech
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20p4G6LzJlU

Yara Shahidi's Woke Speech On Young Womanhood
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hab0hnaAQkE

Angela Davis on Audre Lorde
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpYdfcYrYwE

bell hooks "Are You Still a Slave? Liberating the Black Female Body"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJk0hNROvzs

Patricia Hill Collins, Distinguished Author Speaks at Clemson University
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJQtuoBiGkk

Kimberle Crenshaw Discusses Intersectional Feminism
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROwquxC_GxG

bell hooks and Laverne Cox in a Public Dialogue at The New School
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oMnZlJigY&t=1s

Sister Citizen: Shame Stereotypes and Black Women in America
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bI2X2YHdqUJA

Melissa Harris Perry- How Black Hair Matters
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBAObetZed8

Black Women Share Their Hair Stories
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmqI7TSOncU

Black Women’s Hair Throughout History
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xr1Qv9_XEM

Things Black Girls are Tired of Hearing
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0HV50joSSg

Lupita Nyong’o Braids Hair
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5a4sXrlE5_A

Black Female Voices: Who is Listening - A public dialogue between bell hooks + Melissa Harris-Perry
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OmqaXao1ng&list=PLwg8VB64LkBKvJ7FBcNDx6L-QZC8c-OQ&index=1

Patricia Hill Collins “We Who Believe in Freedom Cannot Rest: Lessons from Black Feminism”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=361q8XkFQ-0&t=4s

Why Black Is Beautiful and Powerful
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cdg7DHCXME

Black Feminism and the Movement for Black Lives
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eV3nnFheQRo&t=4s

❖ Art-Making Activity: Pinterest Board

★ Compile ideas that you have for your art for the show on the Pinterest Board, "Art, Black Feminism, & Museums"
★ The Pinterest Board will act as a space for us to compile points of interest from our experiences during the project
★ Link to the Pinterest Board: http://pin.it/ubakQ_I
APPENDIX K: SLIDE PRESENTATION ON BLACK FEMINIST THEORY

What is Black Feminist Theory?

- Black women both shape the world and are shaped by it...
- Black women act as an activist response to the oppression that Black women in US society experience.
- Black women have a long history of radical thought and practice.
- Black women’s activism is a call to action to break down societal norms and to challenge systems of oppression.

Key Attributes of Black Feminist Theory

- Recognizes that a homogeneous Black women's experience or standpoint does not exist.
- Utilizes a critical race theory framework.
- Recognizes the importance of intersectionality.
- Examines the relationship between race, gender, and class.

Key Figures

- Audre Lorde
- June Jordan

Related Theories/Concepts

- Black Nationalism
- Critical Race Theory
- Feminism
- Intersexuality
- Intersectionality
- Oppositional Knowledge
- Second Wave Feminism
- Transnationalism
- Womansm

"I am a feminist, and what that means to me is much the same as the meaning of the fact that I am Black: it means that I must undertake to love myself and to respect myself as though my very life depended upon self-love and self-respect."

- June Jordan

"I am a Black Feminist. I mean I recognize that my power as well as my primary oppressions come as a result of my blackness as well as my womanness, and therefore my struggles on both of these fronts are inseparable."

- Audre Lorde
Overview of African American Women’s Art History

❖ PowerPoint Presentation on African American Women’s Art History (Google Drive)
  ➢ Link to the Presentation:
    https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1W0RkD1UnUOV8SVJBlkqS_Snmj8c23wfok-iHJGyY/edit?usp=sharing
  ➢ Questions for the Presentation
    ■ What aspect from these African American women’s artworks resonates with you the most?
    ■ How do you see your experiences in relation to that in the art of these African American women artists?

❖ Readings on Art History and Black Women Artists (Google Drive)
  ➢ Choose 1-2 readings from the scholarly journal articles, which include:
    ■ African-American Artists Affirmation Today by Smithsonian American Art Museum
    ■ African American Visual Representation: From Repression to Resistance by Paul Von Blum
    ■ Identity and the Consumption of African American Art in Art Education by Patricia A. Banks
    ■ Theorizing Experience: Four Women Artists of Color by Jessie L. Whitehead
    ■ The Emergence of Black Women Artists: The Founding of “Where We At” by Kay Brown
    ■ The Role of the Black Artist by Elizabeth Catlett
    ■ “Acting like a Man”: Adrian Piper’s Mythic Being and Black Feminism in the 1970s by John P. Bowles
    ■ Mickalene Thomas: Afro-Kitsch and the Queering of Blackness by Derek Conrad Murray
    ■ Pens and Ploughshares: The Historical Use of Art by African-Descended Women to Create Social Justice in the US Neo-Slavery Era by Jenice L. View
    ■ Kara Walker: Cut it Out by Hamza Walker
    ■ Emma Amos: Art Matter by Sharon Patton
    ■ Re-covered: Wangechi Mutu, Kenyatta A.C. Hinkle, and the Postcolonial Potentiality of Black Women in Colonial(ist) Photographs by Kanitra Fletcher
    ■ The Freedom to Say What She Pleases: A Conversation with Faith Ringgold by Melody Graulich & Mara Witzling
    ■ Reinventing Herself: The Black Female Nude by Lisa E. Farrington
    ■ Conceptualism, Politics, & The Art of African-American Women by Lisa
E. Farrington
- Diasporadas: Black Women & the Fine Art of Activism by Bonnie Claudia Harrison
- Reclaiming Histories: Betye & Alison Saar, Feminism, & the Representation of Black Womanhood by Jessica Dallow
- See Me Now by Bridget R. Cooks
- Visualizing Memory: Photographs and the Art of Biography by Deborah Willis
- Link to Google Drive folder: https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B_q7bQ0N3WoiX0NEMU94NE15OT

Questions for the Readings
- What aspects from these texts resonates with you the most?
- How do these texts shape or add to your understanding of art by Black women?
- How do you conceptualize these readings informing the artwork you have seen and the artwork you will make?

Videos about Black Women Artists
- Check out 2 of these videos on different Black women artists
  - Black Women Artists on Art
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4os6tw2hKck
  - Samella Lewis: Pioneering Visual Artist and Educator
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBR_NGRXnRk
  - Elizabeth Catlett: My Advice to Young African Americans
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAl9xr5dbx8
  - Nina Chanel Abney- Always a Winner
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPgpECKr0Lk
  - Nina Chanel Abney: Royal Flush
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2ap9ouAxVk
  - Art21 “A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby” Kara Walker
  - Martine Syms How to See Projects 106 with Martine Syms
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsJan9FHjKc
ENGAGING BLACK WOMEN IN CRITICAL DIALOGUE

- **Art21 “The Kitchen Table Series” Carrie Mae Weems**
- **TEDxNASA Chakaia Booker**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYX1DT-N2l8
- **Art21 “Roaming” Carrie Mae Weems**
- **Mickalene Thomas Studio Visit**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2tJKAfyVhs
- **Two Generations The New York Times (Betye & Alison Saar)**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JD0xQ2ogr04
- **Interview with Mickalene Thomas**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3E1niqEVlQ
- **Howardena Pindell**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nIf7daOqTI
- **In Conversation: Mickalene Thomas and Carrie Mae Weems**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qti-R2YqKnw

➢ **Questions for the Videos**
- Comment with your thoughts on the videos that you watched and how they impacted your ideas about Black women artists and other related issues that were addressed

❖ **Art-Making Activity: Art History Project**
- Take one aspect of art history, art criticism, aesthetics, or art-making of the African American women artists that have been presented (or one that you find on your own) and incorporate it into a work of art in your visual journal
APPENDIX M: SLIDE PRESENTATION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN’S ART HISTORY

**Important Understandings**
- Art History: The history of art (material objects that have been designated as artworks)
  - What accounts for an artwork’s artistic character? Why do artworks change over time? Where do artworks belong in the larger art historical canon?
  - This is about time, chronology, classification, aesthetics, style, intellectual ideas, interpretation, analysis, evaluation, iconography, social & cultural context, and change.
- Art Criticism: Interpreting the meanings of artworks and evaluating their qualities
  - What do you see? What is the artwork about? What tells you that it is good art?
  - Practice of description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment.
- Art Making: Displaying technical skill, design knowledge, and personal expression
  - A means to explore the world, self, and others.
  - Making decisions about media, subject matter, formal qualities, style, technique, scale, and content.
- Aesthetics: Addressing the big questions related to beliefs about the purpose, value, meaning, and nature of art
  - Includes philosophical questions about the purposes of art, concepts, and valuing of art, which leads to dialogue.
  - Connects understandings from art history, art criticism, and art making with our experience of art.

**History of Representations of Black Women in U.S. Society**
- Savage
- Blackface
- Mammy
- Jezebel
- Sapphire
- Tragic Mulatta
- Welfare Queen
- Angry Black Woman
- Independent Black Woman

**Representations of Black Women by Black Male Artists**
- Contraband
- Contraband by Kehinde Wiley
- Departure from the Torva, 1784 by Gordon Parks

**Misrepresentations of Black Women**
- Women in the image: "They fear their own color.
- "Angry Black Woman"

**Representations of Black Women**
- "Serving"""Serving"""Serving"""Serving"
- "Serving"""Serving"""Serving"
- "Serving"""Serving"""Serving"

**Neoclassicism (19th Century)**
- An artist from this time: Edmonia Lewis
- She was the first African American woman sculptor to exhibit in Italy & France.
- She created a bust of Harriet Tubman titled "The Liberator",
  - which had to be opened to reveal her
to the public.
- She created a bust of Harriet Tubman titled "The Liberator",
  - which had to be opened to reveal her
to the public.
  - She gained fame after her bust was exhibited in Europe.
  - Her busts were displayed in London, Paris, and New York.

**Slavery and 18th & 19th Century Art**
- Some artists from this time:
  - Harriet Powers
  - Elizabeth Keckley
- Harriet Powers was an African American quilter and sculptor
  - who was known for her quilts that depicted scenes of African American life.
  - She gained recognition as an artist and was featured in several exhibitions and publications.

**Neoclassicism (19th Century)**
- Neoclassicism is the renewed interest in Greek and Roman art and culture
  - with a focus on simplicity, clarity, and balance.
  - Artists often used ancient Greek and Roman sculptures for inspiration.
  - They sought to create works that were based on idealized forms
  - and featured clear, elegant lines and proportions.
  - The use of Neoclassical elements in art was widespread
  - and influenced many artists during this time period.
Overview of Contemporary Museum Theory and Practice

Readings on Contemporary Museum Theories & Practices (Google Drive)

Choose 1-2 readings from scholarly journal articles, chapters, and essays, which include:

- The Time is Now: Empowering Educators to Examine and Address Race in Their Classrooms by Candra Flanagan
- Poking Holes in the Oil Paintings: The Case for Critical Theory in Postmodern Art Museum Education by Juliet Tapia
- Social Objects by Nina Simon
- The Contextual Model of Learning by John Falk & Lynn Dierking
- The Significance of Museum Education by George Hein
- African Americans Enter the Art Museum by Bridget Cooks
- Back to the Future: The Quilts of Gee’s Bend, 2002 by Bridget Cooks
- African Americans After the Art Museum by Bridget Cooks
- Implications for Practice Revisited by Carole Henry
- Exhibitions as Education by Leslie Bedford
- John Dewey and Art as Experience by Leslie Bedford
- Introduction by Janet Marstine (New Museum Theory and Practice)
- Stimulating Change through Story-Telling by Natasha Reid
- Unheard: Voices of Women of Color in the Museum by Flavia Zuniga-West
- Museum Practices by Steven Lavine
- Moralizing Influences: The Feminization of Art Museum Education by Dana Kletchka
- Enabling Education: Including People with Disabilities in Art Museum Programming by Rebecca McGinnis
- Performing Openness: Learning with Our Audiences and Changing Ourselves by Jessica Gogan
- The Constructivist Museum by George Hein
- Feminist Curatorial Strategies and Practices since the 1970s by Katy Deepwell
- Reframing Studio Art Production and Critique by Helen Klebesadel
- Art Museums and Visual Culture: Pedagogical Theories and Practices as Process by Elizabeth Reese
- Link to Google Drive folder: https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B_q7bQ0N3WoiQlZqLXJySVRUEX

Questions for the Readings

- What aspect from these museum theories and practices resonates with you the most?
How do these strategies and practices affect your opinion on experiences that occur in museums?

How do you see your experiences with museums in relation to these proposed ideas and practices in museums?

How do you conceptualize these readings informing the artwork you have seen and the artwork you will make?

❖ **Videos about Museums**

➢ Check out 2 of these videos on museums

- Reconsidering the Art Museum in the 21st Century | Dana Ketchka | TEDxPSU [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTdZn78u6pI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTdZn78u6pI)
- How will museums of the future look? | Sarah Kenderdine | TEDxGateway 2013 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXhtwFCA_Kc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXhtwFCA_Kc)
- Please Touch the Art | Jen Lewin | TEDxMileHigh [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PENUoKd5Feo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PENUoKd5Feo)
- Museum enlightened: attracting audiences through creativity | David Rau | TEDxConnecticutCollege [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvL0XSLSu9A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvL0XSLSu9A)
- The Transformative Museum | Harry DeLorme | TEDxCreativeCoast [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDdu_ZznQ7U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDdu_ZznQ7U)
- Seeing the Past as Present: Why Museums Matter | Colleen Leth | TEDxOxBridge [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SehKVHo601c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SehKVHo601c)
- Re-thinking museums – We are all curators | Erik Schilp | TEDxLeiden [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHAKYOdbkNE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHAKYOdbkNE)
- Finding freedom in an art museum | Ricky Jackson | TEDxMet [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cClhqDRQim4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cClhqDRQim4)
- Opening up the Museum: Nina Simon @ TEDxSantaCruz [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIcwIh1vZ9w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIcwIh1vZ9w)
- Inside the National Museum of African American History and Culture [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uH-tAj4WA2Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uH-tAj4WA2Y)
- Centennial Conversations: Thelma Golden [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YylkQN1wrng](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YylkQN1wrng)
- Weaving narratives in museum galleries - Thomas P. Campbell [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QXeIqvQNHo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QXeIqvQNHo)
- Talking Museum Diversity with Johnnetta Cole [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PV1MwjFwmGE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PV1MwjFwmGE)
- African American Art Curator Talk [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElbU3LyY5c4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElbU3LyY5c4)
- The Art of Relevance | Nina Simon | TEDxPaloAlto
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTih-I739w4
- AAMD 100: What is an Art Museum?
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yL9Ki2Rc2U
- You are a Museum's Most Powerful Asset | Wendy Meluch | TEDxUCDavisSalon
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFfYLN7vJRk&list=PLHYZiwr0X77tQxjzCOqPfSoA_D4gGvG8

- **Questions for the Videos**
  - Comment with your thoughts on the videos that you watched and how they impacted your ideas about museums

- **Art-Making Activity: Museum of Me**
  - Use a few sheets (or ideas) from the book, “Museum of Me: An Exhibition of the Best Things in Your Life Curated by YOU” by Charlotte Farmer, in your visual journal to think about how elements of yourself and your life can be incorporated into an exhibition
  - Link to Google Drive folder:
    https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B_q7bQ0N3WoiT0hicDI0NnlyNXc