There's a Museum for That? Defining New Pop-Up Experiential Exhibition Spaces

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to richly describe new pop-up experiential exhibition spaces. This study focused on characterizing these spaces, and their organization, in relation to museums as defined by their professional organizations. Visitor experiences in these spaces was also explored. Using a case study design, data were collected from 4 pop-up experiential exhibition spaces through structured interviews and analysis of public-facing documents. Findings suggest that these new spaces function very similarly to museums through their operation, structure and perceived impact. However, this similarity to museums is rejected by these sites, as they see themselves as something new, and in some cases a foil, to museums. The experiences offered in these spaces are intentionally open-ended, self-guided, and exploratory in nature. The results of this study propose additional "museum-like" and "gallery-like" classifications within the pop-up experiential exhibition spaces, and offer the museum field an opportunity to understand these new and upcoming museum competitors.

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

In the last two years, several new museums have opened in large cities across America, with names like the Museum of Ice Cream, the Museum of Pizza, and the Museum of Selfies. Thousands of people buy tickets for these museums, months in advance, and tickets sell out in hours, at a price of over 30 dollars. Often called "Instagram museums" or "pop-up museums" in the media, they move from city to city every four to six months, creating a fervor of interest and disinterest with every new location (Genzlinger, 2011; Haubursin, 2018; Hoffman, 2018; Korte, 2018; Pardes, n.d.) .

Opinions are varied on these new museums. On the one hand, thousands of people are buying tickets, suggesting that they are a popular destination for the public. These new museums are getting positive reviews in the media with television spots and newspaper articles raving about the innovative and exciting experiences these museums can provide (Boyd, n.d.; Haigney, 2018; Johnson, 2017; Pardes, n.d.). On the other hand, some are questioning the value of the experience offered by these institutions, asking if their installations can be really defined as art as some of the sites claim ("At a pop-up museum," 2017; Haubursin, 2018), characterizing the types of experiences they offer as "existential voids" (Hess, 2018), and wondering whether these museums are capable of spreading a message or simply just a place where one can escape for an hour or two (Giordano, 2013; Haigney, 2018; "Made-for-Instagram," 2018; "What's to come from Instagram museums?," n.d.). Good or bad, these new museums are causing a stir. While they are much discussed in the national media, there is little empirical research focused on these new museums and the nature of the experiences they provide.

Whether we like them or not, these institutions are marketing themselves as a new kind of museum, but the museum field knows very little about them. What are their missions? How are

they structured? What experience and expertise does their staff have? How do these new

museums fit under the current field wide definition of what a museum is? And what exactly

makes them a museum? The American Association of Museums (AAM) suggests that the

definition of a museum is relative:

> We may have to live with the fact that "museum" as a concept is the intersection
> of many complex categories, resulting in an organization that people can identify
> intuitively but that cannot be neatly packaged in a definition... If an organization
> considers itself to be a museum, it's in the tent...Our intuitive judgment that this
> apparently diverse group belongs together is born out by the fact that they can, in
> fact, agree on standards that apply to all of them. (Merritt & American
> Association of Museums, 2010)

By leaning into the more nebulous definitions, these new evolutions of museums are proving the

necessity of a less strict museum definition allowing for innovation and growth in a field that is

often slow to adapt. However, it seems prudent that we study these new museums to better

understand how they position themselves within the museum field and which of their practices

might inform the museum field more broadly. The purpose of this study was to richly describe

these new museums, which, for the purpose of this research, were referred to as pop-up,

experiential exhibition spaces, since not all of them self-describe as museums. The research was

guided by two key questions:

1) What are the defining characteristics of new, pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces
   and how are those characteristics similar to and different from established definitions
   of a museum?

2) What is the nature of the visitor experience in new, pop-up, experiential exhibition
   spaces?

This study aimed to be significant to the museum field as a whole, to generate research on a very

recent trend that has not received much scholarly attention. Particularly, this research could be

beneficial and interesting to marketing and communications staff within museums, as these new

institutions have a mass social following and have seemingly perfected the art of creating and maintaining an audience. Because many of these pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces rely on intentional design and installation choices, this study's findings could be beneficial to curatorial and exhibition design staff who may be looking towards these institutions and their display practices for inspiration in their work. Further studies could explore museum perspectives on these new institutions and how different museum groups in particularly are responding to these new museums.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This research offers an in depth study of new, pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces. While these exhibition spaces are charting a path of their own, the actions, display models, choice of language, and dialogue surrounding them have been recorded in various corners of the museology field and popular media more broadly. This chapter reviews the literature pertaining to these new spaces in the following areas: a) pop-up culture and the rise of the curated experience; b) previous iterations of the "pop-up" museum; c) the origins of experiential art; d) what makes a museum; and e) responses to the new, pop-up or Instagram-like, experiential exhibition spaces.

a) Pop-Up Culture and the Rise of the Curated Experience

In order to understand these new, pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces, it is important to look back at the context from which they arose. Pop-up museums emerged as an adaption of the pop-up business model, which was adopted early on by restaurants, food trucks, retail spaces, and art galleries. The pop-up business model involves the short term, typically a few short months sometimes as short as a week, renting of a temporary high traffic location (Davis, Rice, Spagnolo, Struck, & Bull, 2015; Giordano, 2013; Korte, 2018). These decisions are intentional as the pop-up business plan is designed to introduce as many people as possible to the product, service, or brand being promoted (Davis et al., 2015; Giordano, 2013; Wang, 2018). Traditionally the pop-up model stems from trying out a retail space for products and brand activation for new or innovative products or services (Genzlinger, 2011; Giordano, 2013; Quartier, 2014; Wang, 2018). These early adopters, while grouped informally, share important key aspects, as Davis (2015) explains:

A pop-up is established when businesses, governments, universities, community groups, individuals or brands temporarily activate places and spaces for promotion, trials or the sharing of resources. The key element for pop-ups is discovery. Ultimately, they help communities discover new ways to engage, interact and progress. The important elements are the concept, the location and creating a memorable experience (p. 94).

Pop-up experiences, from their very earliest iterations, have been entwined with the ideas of brand activation, public discovery of new products and ideas, and the creation of new avenues of public engagement between brands and their audiences (Johnson, 2017; Wang, 2018). Engagement is such a large factor that many businesses have begun offering pop-up experiences to cash in on the resulting influx of customers they bring (Johnson, 2017).

Pop-up spaces have worked against the predominant notion of brick and mortar stores. The temporary, almost fleeting, nature of these spaces challenges the notion of permanence within the market (Giordano, 2013). This is an intentional action that works to create and empower temporary communities, activate spaces that were previously unused, and shake up the markets as a whole (DelCarlo, 2012; Giordano, 2013; Wang, 2018). Pop-up experiences span a variety of different fields and locales; however, advancement in the pop-up sphere has been focused on three main areas: including marketing, architecture, and retail.

The creation and proliferation of the pop-up methodology is largely about marketing. With pop-up experiences staged for album releases, movies, and clothing launches happening in major cities nearly constantly, the continued expansion in both number and variation of pop-up experiences is rooted deeply in advertisement and promotion (Hoffman, 2018; Schouten, McAlexander, & Koenig, 2007; Wang, 2018). Given the temporary nature of pop-up experiences the audience members are invited to share their experience in hopes of creating public fervor. This fear of missing out ("FOMO") draws others to attend before the time is up (Giordano, 2013; Hoffman, 2018; Wang, 2018). This concept, labeled as "massclusivity" by *The Atlantic's* Steven

Johnson (2017), taps into the public's interest in curated and individualized experiences. Pop-up spaces attempt to address this need on a broad scale through their various iterations.

It is imperative to note the role of social media within the marketing strategies of pop-up events of any kind. The very nature of limited time experiences relies heavily on intense marketing to garner viral sharing. The creation of immense visual spaces for pop-up experiences of any kind drives social media sharing and natural growth as described by *Forbes'* Jenna Wang (2018): "In today's social media age, these experiences will then be documented extensively by consumers and influencers on Instagram or Snapchat, creating an organic advertisement campaign that travels through valuably linked networks" (para. 7).

Architecture has a unique place within the history of the pop-up model. Architectural design has long been used to create impactful spaces. Whether it is the tall cathedrals of Europe, the lasting mega structures of the Egyptians and the Mayans, or even more contemporary skyscrapers like the Burj Khalifa, architecture has been pushing the limits of what the built environment can be from its earliest conceptions to today. This exploration continues today through pavilion architecture, which provides emerging and established architects from around the world with a chance to showcase designs and processes not yet ready for full adoption into long lasting architecture (Hollwich, 2015; Schaik, 2015). Often centered around the production of world fairs, or the Olympics, pavilion architecture allows designers to create lavish temporary structures to highlight what's possible in the field and draw people to these events (Hollwich, 2015; Schaik, 2015). With an intensely visual style that's immediately recognizable and sharable, these pavilions, both past and present, operated in a way to create brand recognition for these temporary events. Elements from architecture are readily adopted into the display styles coopted by the pop-up museums this study researches. These museums hire prominent architects,

such as Sir David Adjaye of the National Museum of the African American History and Culture fame, to design their spaces. Who create whimsical display settings, or simply playfully experiment with space and materials in new and inventive ways (Hollwich, 2015; Schaik, 2015).

The largest category of pop-up experiences are in the areas of food and retail. The proliferation has been so fast and abundant over the last few years that many have been left questioning "Why There Are Pop-Ups for Everything Now" (Genzlinger, 2011). This proliferation has marked a major shift as major corporations and millions of dollars have now entered the brand activation/pop-up field (Wang, 2018). Food trucks were an early entrant into the pop-up arena (Wessel, 2012). Offering a cost-effective way to venture into the culinary industry, food trucks are now a ubiquitous force in the food story of cities worldwide (Severson, 2011; Wessel, 2012). According to Wessel, "Food trucks activate public space" and "foster a sense of community" (Wessel, 2012. Para.18; Wessel, 2012. Para. 24). Much in the way pavilion architecture aims to create place out of an area once considered simply an unlabeled space, food trucks aim to create community in whatever locale they call home for the day.

This idea expands neatly into the push for pop-up retail. Retailers looking to bring people in the door learned from ever popular window displays that visual wonder was an effective tool at bringing people in (Cant & Hefer, 2013; Sen, Block, & Chandran, 2002; Ward, Kerfoot, & Davies, 2003). They adapted these visual styles to livable temporary spaces, where patrons can shop for time limited offers of items and experiences (Cant & Hefer, 2013; Sen et al., 2002; Ward et al., 2003). An example of this can be seen at Macy's department stores, a brand who is still known for their window displays. These displays have become expanded beyond the store window frames and expanded into the interior with the Christmas Santaland temporary installations drawing thousands of visitors to experience their magic ("Don't Miss the Stunning

Christmas Windows at Macy's Herald Square," 2018). Such events rely on social media, the idea of "massclusivity," and intense brand activation to create memorable experiences for guests and to make large profits off their visitation (Johnson, 2017).

In summary, the adoption of the pop-up model in food, retail, architecture, and marketing strategies has resulted in a "pop up culture," a model that in large part was designed to increase profits during the American recession of 2008. This laid the framework for the rise of new pop-up museums, the focus of this study. The 2008 recession affected nearly all areas of American life, from retail spending and housing prices, to museum attendance, food costs, and gas prices (Hurd & Rohwedder, 2010). The new normal, as established after the recession, required industries to do more with less (Hurd & Rohwedder, 2010; "Museums and the Recession," n.d.). Relying on pinching pennies, industries searched for new ways to connect, engage, and activate the public. The pop-up model was one of many ways for industries to innovate in this time of need. Simultaneously, the American economy had slowly been shifting away from a production model towards a service model, where emphasis on goods has given way to a focus on services (Buera & Kaboski, 2012; Rubalcaba, 2007). This shift has intensified, leading to the consolidation of the experience economy, a movement that the pop-up museum phenomenon has emerged from (Pine & Gilmore, 2011).

Internally within museums and galleries, the crunch from the 2008 economic recession was also felt. Many museums took large revenue hits ("Museums and the Recession," 2013). The increasing difficulty of finding financing, as well as the shift of the housing market, left many businesses unable to move forward (Hurd & Rohwedder, 2010). The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) (2012) highlights this important shift by illustrating that one way museums are moving outside their own walls is by

taking advantage of underused retail space (thank you, faltering economy!) to create temporary, low-risk, sometimes low-cost experiences—introducing consumers to unfamiliar product lines that include both luxury goods and museums (p. 11).

Pushing forward into a future of economic uncertainty, museums and many other industries alike had to take creative leaps to adapt, remain relevant, and vie for public attention.

The pop-up model continues to grow. Now that they have entered an age of maturity and mass adoption, pop-ups must keep up with the public's expectations, an important factor in the rise of pop-up museum experiences. The rise of the experience economy has led to mass appeal of experience-based opportunities in a field that has yet to fully catch up (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). This extends not only to the genre of experiences offered but to the technology used:

Customer expectations for pop-up stores have grown. The novelty of the pop-up concept isn't necessarily going to drive traffic on its own; consumer affection for mobile devices and m-commerce means that they are demanding enhanced experiences and multiple modes of engagement in the context of a shopping environment— even if it's temporary (Cradlepoint, 2012).

Consumer expectations of innovative experiences in all aspects of their lives has led to a rise in customized media and products that is dubbed "the Curated Experience" (Tenumah, 2015). The rise of curated experience and the mass appeal of strong brand identity bolster the experiences and public interest in these new museum spaces. In today's world of technology, seemingly personalized content can be curated for you through algorithms and data collection. Feeds of one's favorite celebrities or favorite movies on Netflix, and even the products we order can all be personalized for us with a click of a button. The rise of interest tracking on the internet has led many companies to pay large sums of money to advertise directly to their target audiences across platforms of all sorts (Hu, 2013; Tenumah, 2015). Viewing habits on websites can now start to suggest and personalize future website visits, in hopes of increasing interaction (Hu, 2013).

This extends to the physical spaces of stores. Intense data tracking and consumer evaluation have helped to create a large set of merchandising standards and best practices, adopted by retailers all over the world (Bell & Ternus, 2017). Not only can customers test out which custom sized shoe inserts are best for you or create your own color of lipstick in store, they can now turn online to find, curate, and customize nearly any product they want, from shoes, to hair products, to curated clothes hand-picked just for them ("Custom Lipstick - Lip Labs," 2019; "Dr. Scholl's," 2019; Moon, Chadee, & Tikoo, 2008). As the ease of creating this technology has increased over the years so has the proliferation of the now seemingly endless supply of personalized products at one's fingertips (Hu, 2013; Tenumah, 2015).

b) Previous Iterations of the "Pop-Up Museum"

New pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces, like the Museum of Ice Cream, Museum of Pizza, and Museum of Selfies, are not the first of their kind. As pop-up culture began to take hold, museums, also affected by the US recession, turned to short lived, "pop-up" exhibits and programs as a way to cut costs and feature community-requested content in a timely and cost-effective manner (AAM, 2012). Arising from the for-profit commercial system, the new pop-up museums are distinctly different from the original, non-profit pop-ups that preceded them, in particular in terms of their goals and visitor experiences.

The early pop-up museum exhibit model is described as follows:

The Pop Up Museum is a temporary exhibit created by the people who show up to participate. It works by choosing a theme and venue and then inviting people to bring an object on-topic to share. Participants write a label for their object and leave it on display. A Pop Up Museum usually lasts a few hours on one day. Popping up in unorthodox arts spaces, like libraries or laundromats, Pop Up Museums focus on bringing people together in conversation through stories, art, and objects. They can happen anytime, anywhere, and with any community ("How-To Kit | Pop Up Museum," n.d.).

Similar pop-up museum model projects have been made by practitioners throughout the field. An early model was created by Michelle DelCarlo (2012) who in her research found that these early pop-up spaces fostered a sense of community through the sharing of community sourced objects. The experiences in these early spaces were facilitated interactions with objects and resulted in conversation, community building, and meeting new people. Megumi Nagata (2017) adds to this history in her thesis which explores a similar model. Nagata's research implies that nonprofit pop-up museums "represent an emerging form of museum making," that, like the model defined by DelCarlo, have a particularly beneficial impact on the community building role of museums (p. iii).

c) **Origins of Experiential Art**

The new pop-up, Instagram-like, exhibition spaces studied here rely heavily on combining multiple, room-scale installations to create distinct experiences for their guests. As such, they draw on the history of experiential art installation that began in the 60s and continued to grow and become adopted into the artworld throughout the following years (O'Doherty, 2010; Reiss, 2001; Suderburg, 2000). The growth of installation art in many ways mirrors the growth of pop-up culture. This history is vast and multi-faceted but key artists in this movement and the ideology behind their practices can accurately illustrate the trajectory, origins, and important shifts in the history of installation art. Installation art, originated in the 1960s, with important artists beginning to reject the art world and exhibiting their works in alternative spaces. The installation art genre started to be more extensively integrated into museums in the 1990s.

Rejection of conventions and established norms is a strand that runs throughout the history of the illustrated image but began to take a sharp and intentional turn with modernist artists who rejected the authority of the painted image and worked in abstraction, unconventional

materials, and new processes (Tate, n.d.). One of the most notable pioneers in modernism was Marcel Duchamp. In the late 1910s, Duchamp began his important series of readymades ("MoMA | Marcel Duchamp and the Readymade," n.d.). Readymades are notable in relation to installation art because they illustrate a key moment in the rejection of institutional conventions and canonical expectations. The evidence of Duchamp's hand in the creation of these works in gone. Instead, mass-produced objects sit on pedestals and grow to the level of art through the placement, discussion, and intent of the artist who made it so ("MoMA | Marcel Duchamp and the Readymade," n.d.).

Fountain is the most famous of these readymades. The work consisted of a porcelain urinal signed R. Mutt 1917and placed on a pedestal. This piece was submitted and accepted for the Society of Independent Artists show in New York but never presented to the public at the final showing (Mann, 2017). The tradition of rejecting the art world in an intensely visual way arguably started with these early Duchamp works, and continues with the history of installation art, as the definition of what art is expanded beyond the frame of the artwork and the white walls of the museum (O'Doherty, 2010). Art starts to envelop space, instead of simply adorning it. Duchamp paved the way towards this with his work *Mile of String,* displayed at the Surrealist Art exhibition in New York in 1942, Duchamp strung a mile's worth of twine crossing around the gallery, disrupting the flow of the space ("His Twine," 2013). With this, he expanded art beyond the limits of the walls to create something that dazzled, confused, and possibly disoriented viewers. In this case, Duchamp was intentionally quiet in discussing the intention of this piece. Instead he wanted the public to interpret its meaning freely ("His Twine," 2013).

As time marched on to the 1960s, artists continued the trajectory of rejecting existing conventions of art making and display. They embraced more open-ended processes of art

creation. Artist Allan Kaprow began his notable series of happenings in late 1959 with his influential work, *18 Happenings in Six Parts* at the Rueben gallery in New York (Cain, 2016; Higgins, 1976; Kaprow, 2014; Kirby & Dine, 1967). Gone were the paintings that adorned the walls. Instead the room was subdivided into multiple spaces separated by plastic sheets, wooden beams, and hanging canvas (Cain, 2016; Higgins, 1976; Kaprow, 2014; Kirby & Dine, 1967). What occurred at these happenings was just as much art as what was displayed on the walls of any other gallery. But Kaprow's works had an important additional element; time. The events were supposed to happen once and only once, in a way that included the audience as well as the actors (Higgins, 1976; Kirby & Dine, 1967). Performers were placed in each environment and performed a predetermined action, from squeezing oranges to painting a canvas with lines (Cain, 2016; Higgins, 1976; Kirby & Dine, 1967). These works were considered complete at the end of the evening and were not meant to be repeated.

Temporality continues to be an important aspect in the art world, with artists like Andy Goldsworthy creating fleeting interventions in natural settings which are captured on film and then left to disappear with only the documentation left as a trace of the artist's meticulous work (Funderburg, 2015). Installations build on this, since many of them are temporary and are recreated each time they are displayed in a different setting. Often requiring intense preparation and site specificity, installations are often removed, leaving behind just the connections made and the feelings experienced by the viewers (Tate, n.d.). Much like artists, the creators of pop-up museum spaces craft environments that at times resemble livable spaces that are meant to captivate visitor's imagination. Photographed by guests, these installations are later removed and exist merely as a memory documented by the ones who experienced it.

Scale too is an important part of experiential art. Artist Sol Lewitt is known for his large-scale room drawings that can exist simply as a set of instructions ("The Art of an Idea," 2018). These works are brought into being by professional installers instead of the artist. The artist's mark stays at the level of the instructions and the conceptual prowess of the work ("The Art of an Idea," 2018). Similar works are made by artist Yayoi Kusama whose installation *The Obliteration Room (2002 - present)* exists simply as a white room adorned with IKEA furniture that becomes art as visitors placeof thousands of colorful stickers around the space ("Yayoi Kusama's obliteration room once looked like this - QAGOMA Blog," 2018). Such works are infinitely movable and rely heavily on the material implementation of an idea that can take roots in different places. Many pop-up museums also work in this way with recreating previous installations and requiring visitor activation of their spaces to become complete.

Many museums look towards art installation to help transport visitors to the settings of the stories they hope to tell. For example, some museums as a whole have been created to display installation type exclusively. Most notably MOMA PS1 was a space intended specifically for new installation works. The new space opened with the influential *11 Rooms* exhibit. 11 artists were commissioned to create site-specific works for its new space ("MoMA PS1 history | MoMA," n.d.). The trend of installation inclusion within museum galleries extends to well-respected museums of all subjects and specializations such as the Field museum and the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). The Field Museum has a long standing and well-respected full-scale installation of a Pawnee Earth lodge in its galleries (Bolden, 2016; Cain, 2016). Additional experiential exhibits have been embedded into the newly designed NMAAHC where a segregated lunch counter sits in its gallery. Visitors are invited to follow a historical narrative of someone at the time of the lunch counter protests and

compare their choices to those made by activists and bystanders during the Civil Rights

movement (Bolden, 2016; Cain, 2016). Such spaces do not only invite empathetic connection to

physical sites but primes visitors to think what they could do to incite change.

d) What Makes a Museum

The existence of pop-up museums, be they non-profit or for profit institutions, raises

important questions about the purpose of a museum, and who museums serve. It is important to

first look at institutionally recognized definitions. As quoted earlier, the American Alliance of

Museums (AAM) intentionally defines museums broadly in the hopes of being inclusive of the

future growth of museums. There is a key takeaway from their definition, that if an institution

defines itself as a museum, it can be considered a museum, as long as it agrees to fall in line with

the Alliance's best practices for museums (Merritt & American Association of Museums, 2010).

Internationally, the definition of a museum is far more concrete. The International Committee on

Museums (ICOM) published this guiding definition in 2007:

> A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its
> development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches,
> communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and
> its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment (ICOM,
> 2018).

Compared to AAM's definition, ICOM's definition is more cut and dry on its expectations of

what a museum is and what it does. These two definitions raise at least two important questions.

First, where do pop-up, Instagram-like, exhibition spaces fit into these definitions? Are they

museums by these definitions? This question is rampant in media's coverage of these new

museums. *The Washington Post's* Phillip Kennicot (2018) writes, "Is it even possible to define a

museum today? If the Museum of Ice Cream is a museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art

is a museum, then perhaps the category has lost all coherence" (para. 2). Second, how do for-

profit museums fit within these definitions? Neither AAM's guiding principles nor ICOM's

formal definition leave room for for-profit museums. This is potentially limiting, given that pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces appear to have mass appeal and public support and happily label themselves as museums regardless of their inclusion within field wide organizations.

Regardless of where these new museums fit in with the worldwide institutional standard, many have adopted the self-proposed moniker of a museum through names starting with "The Museum of [subject of museum]." This is an intentional choice on the part of these institutions and pulls from a vast history of the authority of museums and the trust the public has for museum. Museums operate heavily on public trust ("Museums and Public Opinion," 2018; "Trust Me, I'm a Museum," 2015; Wood, 2018). AAM studies show that the public trusts museums more than any other form of information display ("Museums and Public Opinion," 2018): "That trust is apparently based in a perception that museums stand for authority and accuracy in a way that professors, teachers, and books do not" (Gardner, 2004, p. 13).

Almost all museum visitors view museums primarily as an educational venue ("Museums and Public Opinion," 2018). Professional organizations, on the other hand, cite education as simply one of a list of goals for museums (Merritt & American Association of Museums, 2010; "Museum Definition - ICOM," 2018). This disconnect between public expectation and the institutional definitions create tension moving forward if the museum definition does not expand. New pop-up, Instagram-like, experiential art museums complicate this further because they trade on this educational reputation while acting as a retail business rather than an educational institution.

As museums transform, it is important to acknowledge their accepted definitions and to continue to question and update their definitions. The current definitions of museums are well over ten years old (Merritt & American Association of Museums, 2010; "Museum Definition -

ICOM," 2018). The role of museums, along with their community benefits and stories have changed drastically in the last ten years. It is important that their functions be redefined (in a slow-moving field like museums we try to stay on top of the growth and evolution of ourselves moving forward). In fact, AAM CEO Laura Lott has said that adaptation is what makes new pop-up, Instagram-like, experiential art museums so successful: "Pop-up installations have seized on a truth that some more-traditional museums are still coming to terms with: They must adapt to audiences' expectations" (Korte, 2018, para. 15).

So what is the purpose of a museum and how do places like the Museum of Ice Cream, the Museum of Pizza, and the Museum of Selfies fit into that purpose? Museums have a responsibility to follow their established missions, as well as a responsibility to the public they serve (Dillenburg, 2011; Merritt & American Association of Museums, 2010; "Museum Definition - ICOM," 2018). While different for every institution, most missions feature gals related to education, collection preservation and public programs, including exhibitions (Dillenburg, 2011; Merritt & American Association of Museums, 2010; "Museum Definition - ICOM," 2018). As discussed earlier, education is a key expectation of the museum going public (Dillenburg, 2011; "Museums and Public Opinion," 2018). While many new pop-up, Instagram-like, experiential exhibition spaces could, and this study aims to find if they do, have guiding missions and indeed work to serve the public there is one key distinction that makes them stand out, their for-profit status. The implied purpose of these museums is to sell a crafted or curated experience. Historically, museums have existed to inspire wonder and to entertain. Current definitions of museums leave room for entertainment as a purpose, further challenging the exclusion of pop-up from the formal museum definition (Merritt & American Association of Museums, 2010; "Museum Definition - ICOM," 2018). ICOM's definition is inclusive of this

purpose while AAM's is not, moving forward entertainment should become a viable means of museums (Merritt & American Association of Museums, 2010; "Museum Definition - ICOM," 2018). This is highlighted as things strongly centered in the world of entertainment (e.g. theme parks and water parks) look toward museums and aquariums as their competition ("Theme Index," 2017). Moving forward, it is important to note that intended or not, museums serve an entertainment purpose for many of their visitors. It is not outside of a museum's mission to play to those expectations.

e) Responses to These New Museums

Regardless of their place in a formal museum definition, pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces are immensely popular and have garnered attention from museums that have gained increasing interest in offering exhibitions that heighten sensorial experiences. Most notable is the Hirschhorn Museum's traveling Kusama exhibit ("Juxtapoz Magazine - The Blockbuster 'Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors' Exhibition Comes to The Cleveland Museum of Art," 2019). The exhibit aims to showcase Kusama's practice through a retrospective display of her work and the largest number of her infinity rooms, six, ever shown in tandem. The exhibit has been hailed as a blockbuster, showcasing the role of the infinity rooms and their effect on her continuing practice ("Juxtapoz Magazine - The Blockbuster 'Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors' Exhibition Comes to The Cleveland Museum of Art," 2019). Kusama's work, most notably her infinity rooms, have intense visual appeal and are readily instagrammable (Haubursin, 2018). The existence of six infinity rooms in a single space is not only unprecedented, as it has never been done before, but mirrors the display structure at many new, pop-up, Instagram-like, experiential exhibition spaces (Haubursin, 2018). These spaces heavily rely on the use of multiple galleries that have distinct

themes and visual styles. Akin to feeling immersed in one of Kusama's infinity rooms, visitors to pop-up spaces experience being transported into an otherworldly realm.

Wonder, a similar blockbuster show at the Renwick Gallery, aimed to showcase the role of large scale installation art and the effect it has on viewers and the art field as a whole. This exhibit drew more visitors to the museum in six weeks than in the entire previous year by featuring nine site-specific art installations, each taking up a single gallery room ("Smithsonian American Art Museum Releases 'Renwick Gallery WONDER 360' Virtual Reality App," 2016). When remarking on the Renwick show, *The Atlantic's* Katharine Schwab (2016) made this statement: "Increasingly, shows feature big, bold, spectacular works that translate into showy Instagram pictures or Snap stories, allowing art to wow people who might otherwise rarely set foot inside museums" (para. 3). Just like the new pop-up, Instagram-like, experiential exhibition spaces, many mainstream museums, particularly art museums, are turning to large scale and intensely visual works to draw in visitors who may not have visited before.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the National Building Museums showing of *Beach* by Snarkitecture. *Beach* was a large-scale, temporary installation in the museum's large atrium. It temporarily activated its space since it encouraged visitors to wade and lie in nearly a million white balls (Brenner, 2018). This exhibit was a hit, since traveling all over the country and finding its way back to the National Building Museum as part of another show, this time a retrospective, *Fun House* ("The Fun House installation by Snarkitecture at the @BuildingMuseum," 2018). Most interestingly, Snarkitecture as a collective has branched out and made a pop-up space of their own ("'We Want People to Crawl in and Touch It,'" 2018).

Although there are many examples in the media of these new pop-up, Instagram-like, experiential exhibition spaces, and of their potential influence on mainstream museums, there

does not appear to be any research specifically focused on this phenomenon. However, there is much debate about these new museums in the media. American media stands mixed on these new museums, with some hating them for their mindless nature, while others champion their opportunity for momentary escape. Notable positive press explores the role of pop-up, Instagram-like, experiential exhibition spaces in a forward-facing capacity. *The Wall Street Journal's* Korte (2018) doubles down on the impact of these museums and their fit with museum definitions by noting how non-profit museums are "taking notes" from these successful sites (Korte, 2018). In questioning the role of pop-up museums, beyond their immediate appeal of visual splendor, Mazouri (2018) writes,

> Whatever you want to call them……These pop-ups exist for a reason. They're the byproduct of, and a testament to, a culture that demanded it. Instead of disregarding them, we'd be better to have our fun and make it mean something (p. 1).

Recent press on these new museums suggests that regardless of one's feelings about them, they are around to stay, and that it is up to the public to call for better, more impactful experiences from them in the future.

At the same time, while many cite the future of pop-up, Instagram-like, experiential exhibition spaces as bright, many call the iterations that exist currently "selfie factories." For example, *New York Times* writer Hess (2018) committed to visiting all of New York's pop-up experiences in a summer, and wrote,

> But as my summer of pop-ups dragged on, I began to dread my evenings. What began as a kicky story idea became a masochistic march through voids of meaning. I found myself sleepwalking through them, fantasizing about going to a real museum. Or watching television. Or being on Twitter (para. 63).

While possibly drastic, this insight into the commonalities of all pop-up experiences was well listened to. Many are questioning if the work displayed in these new museums is art ("At a pop-up museum," 2017; Haubursin, 2018).

Negative or positive, these museums are the subject of mass public appeal, with an audience expanding well beyond multiple millions. Audience reaction to these spaces is generally positive, with millions of mentions on both twitter and Instagram (Pardes, 2018). Given that museums are influenced by them, the public is visiting them, and the media is talking about them. These pop-up experiential exhibition spaces will likely persist well into the future.

Summary

Pop-up, Instagram-like, experiential exhibition spaces emerged as an adaption of the pop-up business model, previously created by restaurants, food trucks, retail spaces, and art galleries. The establishment of this pop-up model has created a "pop-up culture" that rose in response to the 2008 United States recession, and that has paralleled the gradual shift in the United States from a production-based economy to a service-based economy. These new pop-up museums are not the first of their kind. As pop-up culture began to take hold, museums, also affected by the recession, turned to short-lived, "pop-up" exhibits and programs as a way to cut costs and feature community-requested content in a timely and cost-effective manner.

The new pop-up, Instagram-like, experiential exhibition spaces rely heavily on combining multiple, room-scale installations to create distinct experiences for their guests. The history of experiential art and installation art began in the 1960s and continued to grow and become adopted into the artworld throughout the following years. The growth of installation art in many ways mirrors the growth of pop-up culture, and the adaptation of installation artwork into new pop-up museum is informed by this history.

The existence of new pop-up museums raises important questions about what the purpose of a museum is, who museums serve, and how these new institutions fit into the museum field. Regardless of these questions, new pop-up museums are immensely popular. Mainstream

museums are influenced by their practices, and popular media is talking about them, with some hating them for their mindless nature while others champion their opportunity for momentary escape. In any case, these museums are the subject of mass public appeal, good or bad, with a social reach well beyond multiple millions.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this research study was to richly describe new, pop-up experiential exhibition spaces. The study was guided by these research questions:

1) What are the defining characteristics of new, pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces and how are those characteristics similar to and different from established definitions of a museum?

2) What is the nature of the visitor experience in new, pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces?

This study used a case study design, with multiple data sources. Data were collected through facilitated interviews with professionals at pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces, and through document analysis examining language use in public facing marketing materials when available. This chapter describes the sampling, data collection, and analysis procedures, as well as the methodological limitations of this study.

Sampling

This study included four case study sites, selected through purposive sampling. Sites were selected based on size, location, connection to other museums, and coverage in social and news media. All sites fall into this new category of pop-up museum which has been outlined for the purposes of this study as having the following criteria:

- Traveling/ pop up in nature: temporary exhibits that have been known to move from city to city or plan to.
- Online ticketing with admission ranging anywhere from 20-35 dollars
- Large social media presence
- Reliance on multiple room-sized art installations

● Possible use of titles like "Museum of…."

In total, twenty-five museums met these criteria. twenty were contacted, and four agreed to be studied. The sites are kept anonymous but are loosely described as such:

- *Site 1*: A newly opened pop-up space that centers around the work of a single artist collective in the northeastern United States.

- *Site 2*: An established pop-up space with two locations in the southwestern United States. Subject matter in the museum surround the installation of large 3d illusion paintings.

- *Site 3*: A large espionage-based attraction that utilized pop-up-based practices in their permanent displays. It is run from a Northeastern American City.

- *Site 4*: The largest of the sites studied, this site is a large exhibit in the southwestern United States. This site has a permanent location with plans to expand throughout the country.

These sites were contacted by email, asking to speak with a representative who could speak to the experiences and operation of their spaces. Respondents selected professionals who fit these criteria. Four staff across the 4 sites participated in the study, one from each site. The position of the staff interviewed varied but they were primarily operations leads and marketing professionals.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. A total of four 30-45-minute interviews were conducted. Two interviews were conducted in person at the site, while the others were done over the phone. Interview questions (see Appendix A) were created to richly understand these museums. Document analysis included the collection of

organizational flow charts when available, and an in-depth analysis of press releases and website documents in order to characterize how these new pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces label themselves.

Data Analysis

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. These transcriptions were then analyzed across all sites. This was done to understand how these institutions describe themselves as a whole, to see what similarities unite them and what differences divide them. Document analysis augmented interview analysis. All themes in this study were identified through emergent coding strategies.

Limitations

This study made an attempt to illustrate a large swath of pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces, but in the end, the sites that agreed to participate were primarily in New York. It is possible that this may geographically limit the findings of this study by speaking only to this setting, instead of to pop-ups throughout the country.

Secondarily, these sites are primarily businesses, some of the largest sites declined to participate in this research, thus limiting the study further. Regardless of these limitations, sites were purposely selected to in order to create a sample that covers representative breadth of these new pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces.

Chapter 4: Results

The following chapter summarizes the results of this research study, organized by

research question, followed by themes and sub-themes that arose from data analysis.

RQ1. What are the defining characteristics of new, pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces

and how are those characteristics similar to and different from established definitions of a

museum?

Organizational Type

All 4 case study sites reported a for-profit organizational structure. Uniquely, Site 4 is a

certified public benefit corporation meaning that in addition to the traditional corporate goal of

maximizing shareholder profits, they are additionally chartered to provide a public benefit. When

asked to elaborate, the interviewee said,

> Our first commitment is providing value to the community that we are in… but
> our second commitment is to provide value to our shareholders…[We have] as
> our core, a focus of empowering artists and empowering communities and if we
> generate revenue and generate value for our shareholders along the way that's
> good.

Case study sites defined themselves in different ways. Sites 2 and 4 both referred to

themselves as "attractions" during interviews, while only Site 3 used the term "museum" when

asked to self-define. Site 1 referred to themselves as a "gallery."

Organizational Purpose

Organizational Goals and Mission. Interviewees from all case study sites acknowledged

the existence of institutional goals. These goals manifested differently across the sites, both in

terms of their format and their content. Sites 2 and 3 described formal mission statements, both

featuring active language and seeking to incite change within their visitors, either through

imagination, inspiration, or empowerment. For example, Site 2's mission is, "To offer unique

experiences for friends and family to have together; to have fun and let their imaginations run

wild." They have also adopted the three core values of imagination, expression, and fun as lenses through which organizational decisions are made. Site 3's mission is, "We use education and entertainment to inspire and empower people."

Sites 1 and 4, on the other hand, described more informal organizational goals, focused on art and artists. Site 1 named a multi-faceted goal of, "Familiarizing people with installation art as a concept… [and] to broaden people's vocabulary about what art can be." Site 4 said their goal is "To empower artists whether it be our artists… or the artists that we work with in every community we go into." Both Sites 1 and 4 described movements within their institutions to formalize these goals in the near future.

Educational Goals. When asked about the existence of formalized educational goals, responses varied wildly, from the acknowledgement of non-formalized goals that are illustrated through educational programming to an intentional rejection of the museum educational model. Sites 2 and 3 denied any formalized educational goals for their spaces. Notably, despite the educational and historical content covered in Site 2, when asked about their educational goals, the interviewee had this to say:

> We don't have an education department right now. I don't know if we ever will. It is not something we're focusing on. Right now, we're focusing on people educating themselves, and that's why the museum is self-guided, which is something sometimes the people have a hard time understanding. They expect a tour or a guide.

Opposed to this, Site 1 emphasized their educational potential in their community and beyond: "The first part of that is empowering artists…the second is to expand art into new directions." In seeking to meet this goal, the museum has a fund that works to promote artists in communities nationwide, impactful in-school programs to inspire the next wave of artists, as well as a prolific open studio attached to its attraction that is open to the community for creative purposes for free.

Though Sites 2 and 3 rejected educational goals in various ways, both of them offer school packages to visit their experiences and advertise them as educational experiences.

Collections. Sites 1 and 2 reported that they do not have a collection. Sites 3 and 4 have extensive collections of artifacts (Site 3) and art (Site 4). Site 3 has an extensive loan program, which is run offsite at their home office. While Site 1 said that they do not have a collection, they could easily see the exhibitions created in and for their space traveling around the United States. The artistic studio behind Site 1 has had a series of touring installations in the past and it is very possible that installations debuted at the pop-up site could have a secondary touring life.

Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of all 4 case study sites appeared remarkably similar, with three common themes. First, all four sites mentioned the importance of front-of-house and back-of-house staff positions. In interviews paired with analysis of organization charts, all sites seemed to rely on front-end public facing professionals, fulfilling, among others, visitor services, retail, and security needs, balanced by back-end professionals, operations-based staff who manage, and facilitate the operation of the space.

Second, all 4 case study sites had a stratification of management positions. Notably, all sites reported having operations managers on-site and another position (of various names sometimes chief operating officer, other times creative director) who operate above them. When asked about marketing roles, all sites mentioned hiring marketing managers and sometimes a team of marketing professionals who are cited as important members of the team, with a goal of attracting visitors and maintaining a presence in the cities these sites find themselves. It is important to note that marketing and operations professionals are on site at these institutions and not placed in to the central operating centers that do the planning and design for these spaces.

This highlights the importance of their presence in the physical sites. The emphasis on marketing professionals fulfilling equally important roles in these spaces to those of staff members fulfilling front and back end roles seems to be unique in these organizations. As institutions that seemingly serve the purpose of running themselves separate from creating and maintaining themselves, promotion and marketing is seen as an essential role in the daily operations of these sites, one worthy of being housed and staffed onsite rather than offsite like many other creative positions.

Third, all 4 case study sites reported having a central office that acts as the core of planning and design and is physically separate from their experiential space. For example, Site 3 has an experiential space in a larger northeastern city, and a central office space in England. Most of the staff on site at these sites' central offices are operations- and facilitation- based, as opposed to programming- or experience-based. Naturally, the staff size differs from site to site. Most notably, Site 4 features a creative team at their site that benefits its community actively by hosting concerts and events on site. The site also houses a non-profit wing featuring a large community art education center which does far more than simply facilitating an interactive experience.

<u>Audience</u>

Sites 1, 2 and 3 all reported calling the people who come to their space "visitors." At Site 4, the term "participants" was used, which falls in line with the more active role they prescribed to their visitors. When asked to describe the typical visitor and who the museum advertises to, answers varied across sites. The most common answer was that "our museum is for everyone" (Sites 1, 2, 4). Two case study sites reported an emphasis on families and children (Sites 2, 4).

Sites 2 and 3 described school tour rates and cited the regularity of student presence in their spaces when discussing their common visitors.

The interests of those who come to these spaces also varys, according to interviewees. While some sites felt they appeal to those with particular interests in the subject matter being covered in these spaces (Sites 1, 3), others simply said that sometimes people are just there for photo opportunities and that is something they encourage (Sites 1, 2). Further, many sites shared that the advertising and word of mouth sharing of experiences create a general public curiosity on which they capitalize. This public curiosity was remarked as a major factor for visiting at Sites 1 and 4. Regardless of the different terms in which they think about their typical visitor, when asked about who they advertise to, the resounding answer from all case study sites was that they advertise to "everyone".

Marketing

Case study sites reported using a vast array of marketing strategies, from on-the-street promoters (Site 2), on-cab marketing (Site 3), to promotional events at similar sites (Site 1), intense word of mouth marketing (Site 4), social media marketing and targeted web adds (Sites 1, 2, 3, 4). The interviewee from Site 4 mentioned some of their social media achievements such as most Instagrammed or largest attraction in a sector of the United States. The interviewee from Site 1 remarked, "I think in this day and age, it's good marketing practice to try and encourage people to share things on social media."

Relationship to Museums

When asked how they see their institutions in relationship to museums, all 4 case study sites emphasized the intention of their institution to reject the traditional museum model. An interviewee from Site 4 commented, "We both want to create compelling experiences for our

visitors, we both want people to engage with art, but we really want to throw the traditional museum model on its head." An interviewee from Site 3 reflected a similar opinion stating, "We tell historical stories here and we do have that historical museum element but other than that we're so different." When prompted to describe how exactly they were different than a more traditional museum, interviewees from all 4 case study sites referred to three main themes: a) interaction/technology; b) the concept of freshness; and c) inclusion/immersion. Aside from their resemblance to museums in some instances, the exhibits on these sites share a strong similarity to art installation practices as highlighted in the literature review. Sites 1, 2 and 4, all directly reference the importance of art within their sites and the installation-based form that they use within their designs.

Interaction/Technology. Sites 1, 3 and 4 all mentioned the interactive element, technological or not, as something that puts them in a new category from what they consider to be a traditional museum experience. The interviewee from Site 3 remarked, "Here, everyone can have a different experience by engaging with technology and can come away differently." The Site 4 interviewee shared a playful remark when discussing interaction as it plays out in their space,

> "We want people to touch, play, and pull on things and we have a running joke that if something breaks it's our fault…If you go to the Louvre and are touching a canvas you're going to get thrown out really quickly."

The concept of freshness. Second to the theme of interaction was the commonality of freshness. Interviewees from Sites 1 and 2 mentioned the ever-changing nature of their exhibits as a benefit that they believe sets them apart from a traditional museum. Notably, the interviewee from Site 2 commented,

> We always have something new. We are always looking to add new art so if you come to [Site 2] once, you can of course come a second time, but you will find something different… we don't repeat ourselves all of the time.

The interviewee from Site 1 stated, "Kind of like any museums, we don't want to keep the exhibits the same forever, because we want to encourage people to return, if they've been here before we want to give them new things to see and do."

Inclusion/Immersion. This theme stems uniquely from one site but has threads seen in nearly every other case study site. Site 4 champions an inclusive approach to all their practices stating,

> In many ways, the museum or gallery model is very exclusive. We consider ourselves to be radically inclusive which means that everyone has a voice in creation. I say you're only going to have a few thousand artists who are ever going to create for a museum, but every single person who comes into our exhibition is an artist and a creator and they are able to have that creativity and that moment of wondering, 'What if?' I'd say that's pretty different from a normal museum.

Interviewees from every case study site mentioned something similar, related to the idea of including or immersing the visitor in the experience of creation. For example, the interviewee from Site 1 explained,

> I hope [visitors] are able to come away with a broader idea of how art can make you feel and how things can be immersive, not necessarily going to a museum and viewing a thing on a will, which I also feel can be an immersive experience, but I don't think everyone feels the same way.

Measuring Success

All case study sites claimed that they're still trying to define and measure success. For example, the interviewee from Site 4 explained,

> How do you measure these really emotional experiences, and people telling us that they leave our spaces like, 'That completely changed my life.' So that metric, on a larger philosophical side, is really challenging for us to come up with measures beyond just numerical values.

All case study sites reported using ticket sales and the number of people coming through the door as an important metric of success. Site 2, through the design of its experience and timed

entry, can track visitor numbers down to a 15-minute interval. These data are then used to change peak and off-peak times, which are directly tied to ticket prices.

Interaction on social media is another important metric, with many sites reporting that these influence organizational decisions (Sites 2, 3, 4). Further than this, reviews on rating websites like Google and Yelp are very important to these sites, with both Sites 2 and 3 remarking on their influence. The interviewee from Site 3 said, "We always pay attention to the reviews we have on Yelp and Google. This is a way to measure success…we are always thinking our rating should be better, but the museum is very popular, and we check how people recommend the museum to others."

To measure success, all case study sites reported doing some kind of audience research, even if minimal at the moment of this study. Sites 3 and 4 cited extensive research initiatives. For example, Site 3 collects a variety of metrics from their audience as they move through the space, based on a wristband-based RFID device that visitors use to check into interaction stations and interact with the space. Though specifics were not expressed, it was shared that these data are used, or at least intended to be used, as a way to track people and their experiences in the space. These statistics will go forward to inform future decisions and also drive the ticketing prices or peak and off peak times. Site 4 similarly described multiple strategies to conduct research from kiosks in the space, to email blasts, and Facebook polls.

While all case study sites said they think about their impact on their local communities, their focus varied. For some, this impact was about a place-based destination. For example, the interviewee from Site 1 claimed, "I think it provides an interesting activity for the area which is previously lacking in any attractions. I think that since [another arts attraction] has moved up

here, that has changed, but this space gives an endpoint to that and kind of solidifies this area as

a place to be."

For others, impact was about empowerment. Site 3's interviewee discussed how their

community impact has changed over the year they have been open, saying, "By the time you

visit the museum, and you're done, you go through a debrief and I really feel that people leave

here feeling empowered. We kind of strip you down here in the beginning…but by the time

you're done, you leave stronger."

For still others (Site 4), impact was economic based:

> But more than that, we are a company that is about creating worlds and creating
> stories and being radically inclusive, and carrying that into the community beyond
> just ourselves has been really cool. The first part has been employing thousands of
> artists…every year we donate $100,000 to $200,000 a year through art spaces
> throughout the country…The learning center offers school programs. There's a
> whole slew of what we look like in the community and it's something we've been
> very cautious of with our expansion. In [a future location], we have a paid
> community advisory panel over this huge spread of [the city] so we don't just
> come into the community and plaster over what we think the community should
> be but we really take that community and we really empower them and take that
> community to show what [one of our sites] looks like with their support.

RQ2. What is the nature of the visitor experience in new, pop-up, experiential exhibition

spaces?

The visitor experiences these case study sites offer are an equally important measure in

aiming to fully describe them. Five themes emerged relative to how visitors experience these

institutions: a) active; b) unique; c) personalized; d) aesthetic; and e) temporary.

Active

Looking at the websites of these 4 case study sites, active words like engagement,

exploration, interaction, and experience are consistently used to describe the experience. For

example, Site 1 described themselves as "interactive" as well as focusing on the installation and

exhibit offerings they provide. Site 2 described themselves "exciting and fun for everyone."

They highlighted the physical exhibit structure of their site. Site 3 cited "immersion and technology." Site 4 cited "exploration" and "immersion" throughout the interview often referring to their exhibit as an experience.

Unique

Further description in interviews highlighted the unique and compelling experiences that these spaces host. The interviewee from Site 4 compared their space to "[Being] Alice dropped in the middle of Wonderland and just walk[ing] through it." The interviewee from Site 3 said, "We are a museum first, but there are other things going on. We have an interactive component…the ultimate goal is to discover your inner spy. There's a personal journey as well as a historical one." Most interesting when discussing their origins, the interviewee from Site 1 acknowledged outside influence in their creation: "They [our larger site] wanted something to kind of draw people into this space as a whole to kind of bring people back to retail so this is, or rather was, supposed to be the kind of attraction that could draw people in."

Personalized

When discussing the typical experience of a visitor to their space, interviewees from all case study sites remarked on the individuality of their experience and how, through their display practices, they have turned a one-size-fits-all experience into a uniquely personal experience for everyone. Site 3 remarked that "No two people have the same experience in our space." This sentiment was shared by Site 4 who championed the open floorplan and exploration that happens in their space.

All sites described an over 45-minute average time spent by people at their institution, and an emphasis on exploration and discovery. Site 1 mentioned their 45-minute time slots, a short video with one of the artists and a free roam exploration through the exhibition. The

experiences at Site 2 typically lasts 45-90 minutes and revolves around photo taking and exploration of the space. A typical experience at Site 3 lasts anywhere from 2-3 hours and revolves around using a RFID bracelet to check in at digital stations interspersed within museum galleries of espionage artifacts and using their wristbands to check in and complete challenges. The time frame is important because in all of these sites visitors are invited and encouraged to explore the space at their own pace and without explicit guiding. The long hold times of these exhibits help illustrate how deeply the visitors capitalize on this eagerness to explore. Finally, Site 4's experience likewise revolves around exploration of the wonderous installation environment. Similar to other sites they cite a two to two-and-a-half-hour average time. Unique to this site is a narrative that is embedded within the exhibit that benefits repeat visitation.

<u>Design Aesthetic</u>

As spaces that have evolved out of the history of installation art, all four case study sites have a clear emphasis on the visual aspects of their space. Site 3 exclusively referenced the prestigious museum architect who designed their spaces and the use of designs that influences experiences. Site 3 in particular paid specific attention to interactions which required privacy (ex. A lie detector test) versus which activities are reliant on openness and interactive space (ex. A surveillance activity in a large round video room).

Site 2 emphasized the large 3D illusions that dominate its spaces and dictate the way visitors move through, interact, and experience the spaces in the exhibit. They hinted that their future plan is to expand this visual theme with the inclusion of more optical illusions. The fourth case study site introduced a concept that they call the "accessible none" wherein they "take something relatable…then around the corner there's something completely out of this world….

taking the familiar and throwing it on its head." This is done in order to evoke an emotional response of awe and immersion that the site tries hard to embed throughout the space.

Site 1's current exhibit utilizes light and shadow in its display, with heavy shades that block most of the light in the space, light produced within large sculptures that fill the gallery orient guests to the space they have newly discovered. Their space also has an original musical score which is a unique aspect.

Temporary

All 4 case study sites were pop-up in nature, meaning that they move from city to city every 3 to 6 months. For example, analysis of sites' websites shows that Site1 plans to occupy their space full time but that each exhibit that occupies their space will rotate every 4 months. Site 2 started in one city for six months before closing for a massive reinstall. They then moved to a second city to establish a second site that will be open while the first site is closed. Site 3 has a single permanent space but has a rotating gallery space for installation-based exhibits which rotate every four to six months. Site 4 similarly occupies a permanent space but has announced plans for expansion in three different cities in the coming years. In addition to this the original site continues to work with new artists to reinstall and update their showings on a regular basis

The temporality of these spaces heavily taps into and extends the feeling of freshness and one-of-a-kind experiences. In order to stay fresh, many case study sites rely on moving from city to city to drum up word of mouth and capture the all-important "Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)." Site 1 does not move from city to city, but rather reinstalls their exhibit/experience four times a year. They emphasized that new experiences encourage people to return and introduce new art works to the public. The interviewee from Site 2 discussed how their installations do not differ in their 3D Illusion display style, but they do differ on the subject matter of the scenes they display.

The scenes displayed in one city are original for each site, with many scenes created in direct reference to areas of the city in which the institution stands and the popular culture of that area. Site 3 is a unique case, with sponsorships with large companies and movie studios defining much of their relationship to the area.

All 4 case study sites articulated plans for expanding their current sites to additional places. Site 4 connected their expansion to their goal of empowering artists: "We want to show more people art and what that looks like in 2019. It doesn't have to be just going to a gallery, but it can be really beautiful and individual and moving. There's no one way or one experience that it has to be." Overall, the reason for which these institutions are expanding is to broaden their missions and continue to stay relevant in an ever-growing field.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this research study was to describe the defining characteristics of new, pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces. The research was guided by two key questions: 1) What are the defining characteristics of new, pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces and how are those characteristics similar to and different from established definitions of a museum?; and, 2) What is the nature of the visitor experience in new, pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces? Using a case study design, data were collected through multiple sources, including facilitated interviews with staff employed at pop-up exhibition spaces, and analysis of case study sites' websites and other publicly published materials. This chapter summarizes conclusions from the study, situating these findings within the existing literature and suggesting further implications for the museum field.

Conclusions

RQ1. What are the defining characteristics of new, pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces and how are those characteristics similar to and different from established definitions of a museum?

The findings of this study suggest that there are four key characteristics that all of the pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces studied here share. First, they share a common organizational structure. They are all for-profit companies, and they all augment that for-profit motive through extensive marketing strategies, run by on-site marketing professionals. All sites host only operations staff on-site while programmatic staff (i.e. curator or designers) are hosted off-site in headquarter spaces. This differs from a traditional museum which, in most cases, houses their operations and design staff under one roof, or in close proximity. However, the industry leading definitions of museums to not exclude organizations that have operations outside of their permanent space (Dillenburg, 2011; Merritt & American Association of Museums, 2010; "Museum Definition - ICOM," 2018).

Second, all of these sites are temporary in nature, either including rotating exhibits, moving exhibits from city to city, or creating additional physical spaces to maintain something new. The industry accepted definition of a museum does not limit museums to having a single locale, there are plenty of museums that have multiple sites (the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Guggenheim etc.) The museum definitions do not refer to a permanent site either (Dillenburg, 2011; Merritt & American Association of Museums, 2010; "Museum Definition - ICOM," 2018). These exhibits fit well within the operating museum definition in this regard. The transformation of these spaces into a traveling brand speaks to the brand activation potential of these spaces. Though they fit into the museum definition in this regard, the temporality that these spaces rely on is different than a temporality of a limited time exhibit or event. The temporary nature of these spaces is intrinsically tied to the existence and pop-up term which defines them. Remarks of the respondents highlighted and solidified media's assumptions that pop-up spaces are reliant on FOMO and use their temporality to create mass appeal and stir up public interest (Genzlinger, 2011; Haubursin, 2018; Johnson, 2017; Korte, 2018; Wang, 2018).

Third, all of the pop-up exhibition spaces studied here have educational goals of some kind, though some are not formally adopted by their institutions. These goals are either about inspiring or empowering people in general, or more specifically about exposing people to art. The existence of these goals falls in line with the expectations of the public for museums and similar institutions to have a focus on education as an outcome ("Museums and Public Opinion," 2018). The takeaways presented by the pop-up sites also act to solidify and confirm assumptions made by the media in their coverage. Just like the food trucks that preceded them, pop-up experiential exhibits are seen as having immense community building impacts upon their guests and the locales they call home (K. Severson, 2011; Wessel, 2012). Paired with this, the ability of

these new spaces to activate previously unused spaces and transform areas has been highlighted by respondents, further speaking to the power of the pop-up experience in creating and maintaining space and brands as highlighted through much of the surrounding literature ("Made-for-Instagram," 2018; Schaik, 2015; Wang, 2018; Wessel, 2012).

Fourth, all of the sites studied here champion the immense potential of their spaces to inspire their visitors, and to trigger affective reactions. The reported sites see their biggest impact as leaving visitors different than when they arrived. This is described in many ways such as a transformation of perspective, artistic thought, or a transformation of understanding what an artistic experience can be. Qualitative and emotional impact are areas well-documented within museum research, further associating these new exhibits with museums. Though this is an aspect of impacts that other museums are trying and succeeding to implement, these new spaces bring a new way of interacting and creating these responses. Through their focus on the experiential aspects of their display, these spaces see and describe themselves as being uniquely suited in creating affective personal experiences for their guests. Many of these effects are questioned in the media and are thus solidified by these findings (DelCarlo, 2012.; "How-To Kit | Pop Up Museum," 2013; "Made-for-Instagram," 2018; Nagata, 2017.; Schaik, 2015b).

These findings raise the important question, 'Are these new, pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces museums or are they something else?' Results from this study suggest that these spaces have much in common with museums, although to varying degrees. "Museum-like" pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces fall solidly in line with the definition of museum. These spaces have formal collections, conduct active research, and have a central guiding goal through which all their operations are filtered. These goals act much like a mission, in the same way a non-profit museum would use active and experiential-based language to center their practices.

The use of experiential-based language falls in line strongly with AAM's recent recommendation for museums who aim to provide experiences for their visitors. These guidelines call for museums to adapt their missions to match these new strategies, thus informing the "museum-like" titling of these sites ("As Museums Fall in Love With 'Experiences,' Their Core Missions Face Redefinition," 2019). Furthermore, "museum-like" pop-up, exhibition spaces are hosted in permanent spaces that have been extensively designed and altered that host exhibits, much in the same way that museum galleries are sometimes redesigned for hosting different exhibitions. In addition, these spaces generate new interactive technologies, a feature that historically has been tied to museum practices.

Other pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces are distinctly different from the "museum-like" ones in that they do not look like museums. Rather, they look more like art galleries, and so here they are called "gallery-like" pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces. On the surface, these spaces exist primarily as a way to present experiential spaces to the masses, trying to reach as many people as possible. The experiences in these spaces are interactive in nature, but lack the additional activities offered in "museum-like" pop-up, exhibition spaces such as lectures, maker spaces, and public events. As a result, "gallery-like" pop-ups are more likely to consider themselves as a place for everyone. Their main draw is their experience, and they do not have secondary functions in the way of lectures or other activities. These spaces frequently change their installations and exhibits, to maintain freshness of the experience, an act that is reminiscent of art gallery practices. "Gallery-like" museums strongly encourage photo opportunities and target their Instagram community. They do not feature the "museum-like" qualities of extensive research, technology generation, and a physical collection, educational focus.

However, what is interesting is that while these "museum-like" pop-up, exhibition spaces may look like museums, they do not consider themselves to be museums. In fact, they whole-heartedly reject museum standards, and instead see themselves as a contrary complement to the experiences one may have in a museum. This idea has been brought up in the literature and is immensely interesting for the field. It raises many questions for the field as a whole such as: What does it mean for a business to look and act like a museum while not agreeing to the organizational standards that make us all accountable? Should we fight against the "gallery-like" pop-ups using the "Museum of …" name? Finally, should we make room for these new spaces in the museum definition, knowing their intentional rejection of the museum model? The Museum field as a whole should strongly consider the benefits of including "museum like" pop up spaces into the formal museum definition. Though the examples from this research are for-profit institutions, and thus out of the running for full inclusion within our professional groups, I strongly urge that in moving forward we begin to reject the assumption that the for-profit structure some museums have discredits them from being influential on the museum field as a whole. In the future I urge the field to consider relaxing the limits on for-profit museum inclusion. While the for-profit motive can stand against displaying factual information and following established best practices in certain situations. I believe that a system can be created to possibly merge the for profit and non-profit museum sectors. Perhaps a much stricter accreditation process and a public denouncement of museums that break these standards could act as a way to get buy in and agreement for these businesses. Naturally such a proposal would have to be agreed upon by all, but I urge professionals to remain open eared moving forward as the drive for profit in these sites in some ways is forcing quick innovation in an otherwise slow moving field.

RQ2. What is the nature of the visitor experience in new, pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces?

The findings in this study suggest that the visitor experience at new, pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces emphasizes three key things, including engagement, active exploration, and immersion. The spaces that comprise these exhibits are crafted to maximize immersion, visual impact, and emotional effect. All of these exhibits empower their visitors to explore every inch of their space and promote a freeform path to allow the exhibit to be self-guided and visitor centered. Intentional design decisions have been made for every square foot of these spaces but how one interacts in the space, how one traverses it and what one chooses to see is all up to the visitor. This is a concept that contrast with strictly designed single path exhibits.

While "every visit is unique" was a strong connector through all sites, Site 4 posed a unique counter. They stated that no matter your background, you can have the same experience in their space. While this seems to counter the unique aspect of these exhibit spaces, it speaks deeply to the larger goal of these new exhibits and their perceived impacts. These spaces highlight and privilege emotional impact over all else. In the case of Site 4, this impact is to empower artists and to expand curiosity within visitors. All sites referenced the ability and intentionality of their spaces to expand visitors' views on the themes they cover and the experiences one can have with those topics. This differs from most museums, and the public's expectation that takeaways are measurable things. Site 4 questioned this in their interview remarking on the difficulty of analyzing qualitative takeaways. While one of these museums works in telling more hard facts (Site 3), the majority of these sites aim particularly to sell a main experience; an experience that leaves you with memories more than knowledge.

The memorable impact of these sites is not the only impact these exhibits aim to have. Just as the literature suggested, the pop-up experience exhibit can activate spaces that were previously unused to create mass community impact (DelCarlo, 2012; Wessel, 2012).

Interestingly, though these for-profit pop-up spaces provide experiences that are drastically different from the object- and community-based practices of the previous non-profit iteration, both non-profit and for-profit pop-up exhibits have community impacts as a central effect (DelCarlo, 2012; Nagata, 2017). Community impact is a central goal of sites like Site 4 who continuously cites the importance of their reliance on the community in all their practices. Moving forward I urge these sites, and sites like it, to continue their push into their communities to not only remain relevant but to capitalize on their intense brand activation potential. If a site like the Museum of Pizza can expand beyond just a temporary activation of space and leave a lasting impact on the communities it find itself in the museum field may be more willing to see these exciting new spaces as more than just a fad.

Implications

The results of this study expand the museum field's understanding of new pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces like the Museum of Ice Cream and the Museum of Pizza. Although there is much conversation about these new spaces in the popular media, there is almost no research on them. This study starts the conversation about these museums in formal museology research and, by doing so, can act as a stable foundation on which further research can build. While the subject matter of this forthcoming research can be theoretically infinite, there are two studies that stand forth as intelligent first phases of exploration.

This research implies the existence of two types of pop-up, exhibition spaces, those that are "museum-like" and those that are "gallery-like." Future studies could test if the distinctions outlined by these findings hold true across a larger, more diverse sample of pop-up experiential museums. By exploring pop-up experience exhibits through the lens of this distinction, new and exciting data can be collected to continue to solidify, complicate or disprove this theory; findings

of this sort will better the field's understanding of these new sites and continue to fill the gap

within the literature. Such an examination could take a similar case study approach, utilizing a

facilitated interview method paired with document analysis, this time taking a much firmer

stance on collecting any internal documents that relate to mission, exhibit operation and staff

organization. These sites could be carefully selected in order to create a pool of study

participants that span the full breadth of pop-up, exhibition spaces.

A second study could be crafted that investigates the impacts of these new pop-up,

experiential exhibition spaces on various fields. Museum impacts and reactions should be the

first ones to be examined from this perspective. Such a study could use a survey design to inquire

about museum professionals' awareness, thoughts, and reactions, formally enacted or not,

towards these new spaces. The literature illustrates the existence of specific museum reactions to

the pop-up movement (Giordano, 2013; Haubursin, 2018; "Is it a museum or not?," 2018;

Pardes, n.d.). It also suggests that practices from these new, pop-up exhibition spaces are being

used in major museums (Brenner, n.d.; "Juxtapoz Magazine - The Blockbuster 'Yayoi Kusama:

Infinity Mirrors' Exhibition Comes to The Cleveland Museum of Art," 2019; "Smithsonian

American Art Museum Releases 'Renwick Gallery WONDER 360' Virtual Reality App," ; "The

Fun House installation by Snarkitecture at the @BuildingMuseum," 2016). This future study

could expand existing literature to delineate why and how museums might be borrowing from

new, pop-up exhibition spaces. This research would be more applicable to museum professionals

worldwide as it will outline the field's awareness, thoughts and reactions to these new pop-up

sites and illustrate the importance of these sites to the field through practitioners' own words.

For practitioners, it is clear that though their exhibits may not currently fit into the

museum definition, their displays are competing for viewership with trusted museums. These

new exhibits are built upon a history of marketing, brand activation, and intense public appeal. They bring all of this in addition to visual splendor and visitor focus. Museums can learn from this. It is easy to see that marketing has a huge impact on how the public can perceive museums and that strong social media promotion can pay off in regards to visitation.

The findings of this study can also inform decisions concerning exhibition design. Pop-up, experiential exhibition spaces stage immersive and active environments. The public clamor over these experiences is something that exhibit designers in museums should investigate and consider emulating in part in order to capitalize on the public interest and possible expectation of an engaging museum experience.

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Appendix A: Consent Talking Points

DESCRIPTION OF CONSENT/RECRUITMENT
TALKING POINTS FOR IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS

Caleb Stockham
Museology Graduate Program

Recruitment talking points will include the following:
• Confirm that museum professional works at a qualifying museum site;

Consent talking points will include the following:
• Data collector's name and affiliation;
• Purpose of the study;
• Voluntary nature of participation, and that there are no consequences for choosing to not participate;
• Participation involves a 15-30 minute in-person interview that will be recorded; only the research team will hear the recordings;
• Subject's responses will remain confidential; subjects may be quoted, but without any identifying information;
• Name and phone number of a study contact person.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interview Guide:
Caleb Stockham
Thesis Advisor: Dr. Jessica Luke, Museology Graduate Program, University of Washington.

Introduction:

  Thank you for taking part in my study. I'd just like to reiterate that for the purposes of this interview I'm interested in your role at your museum, how you see your museum and its impacts. I'm interviewing multiple people within your museum so truly this interview is getting at your perceptions your unique role and how it fits into your unique museum.

  I'm grounding this research with a firm stance that your museum fits into a new category or type of museums, while I'm not defining it formally at this point in my research these are often labeled Instagram museums or pop-up museums. The goal of this research is to deeply understand this new type of museum and through this interview I'm looking to gain and understanding of how your museum works and also a little bit of the visitor experience that your museum provides.

  If there are any questions you'd like to skip or need a break for any reason please let me know. Are there any other questions you have before we begin?

Guide:

General organizational questions

1. Describe your role at your organization.

2. How do you describe your organization to people who have never heard of it before? (Probes: What do you call it – a company, an organization, a museum, something else?)

3. How is the organization incorporated? (Probes: Is it a for-profit company? Is it a non-profit? Something else?)

4. What is the organization's mission statement or guiding principles?

5. Describe your internal organizational structure. (Probes: How many full-time staff do you have? Part-time staff? Any volunteers?)

Defining organizational questions

1. In what ways do you think your organization is similar to a museum? In what ways is it different from a museum?

2. How do you see your organization comparing to a touring exhibition?

3. What do you call the people who buy tickets to come to your organization? Are they patrons? Customers? Guests? Visitors?

4. How would you describe the typical [patron/customer/guest/visitor] to your organization?
   a. Why are they there?
   b. Who are they there with?
   c. Do they have any particular interests?
   d. How old are they?

4. How would you describe the typical [patron/customer/guest/visitor] experience?
   a. How long do they stay?
   b. What do they do?
   c. Do they share their experience on social media?
   d. Do they come back again or is it a one-time thing?

5. I'd like to know more about the design of the experiences you offer. Are their certain elements or qualities of a space you aim to highlight when creating your museum?

6. A large portion of your audience shares their experience on social media, is this something you promote and why?

7. How do you measure the success of your organization? What does success look like?

8. As an institution do you have any educational goals for your experiences?

9. I noticed on your website that your [organization] travels from city to city. What's the rationale for that? Why not stay in one city? In each of these iterations does the museum change? And in What ways has your museum changed from site to site.

10. Does your[organization] have a collection of any kind?

11. Does your [organization]museum conduct any active research?

12. What impacts if any do you hope that visitors take away after a visit to your [organization].

13. How do you think your organization impacts the community it's in?