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Lisa Christine DeLosso

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The Thesis committee for Lisa Christine DeLosso

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A Phenomenon of Thought:
Liminal Theory in the Museum

APPROVED BY

SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor: ____________________________________

Melinda M. Mayer

____

Paul E. Bolin

A Phenomenon of Thought:
Liminal Theory in the Museum

by

Lisa Christine DeLosso, B.A.; B.S.

Thesis

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to the person responsible for guiding me to The University of Texas at Austin: Dr. David Ebitz. Even though several years have passed since my graduation from The Pennsylvania State University in 2007, I still believe that David is the ultimate mentor. He always possessed unwavering belief in me and encouraged me to go to Austin to pursue my dreams.

Thank you so much for everything, David.

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I would like to thank Dr. Melinda Mayer for her countless hours of encouragement while writing this thesis. She was able to simultaneously challenge and nurture me time and time again. I truly believe that her elite level of scholarship is one of the greatest contributions to the field of museum education today. All her comments and insights about this thesis molded me into a well-rounded person and educator.

I would also like to thank Dr. J. Ulbricht for sparking my interest in liminal theory. Additionally, I would like to thank him for continuing to contribute scholarly writings to the field of art education over a remarkably long career; it has inspired me to try and do the same. I am also appreciative of Dr. Paul Bolin for being a fantastic storyteller, a model historian, and the best graduate supervisor for whom I could ever ask.

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Most importantly, I would like to thank my parents and my family; their support, encouragement, and love have always meant the world to me—even when we are miles apart. Thank you so, so much for making absolutely every letter in this thesis possible.

A Phenomenon of Thought:
Liminal Theory in the Museum

by

Lisa Christine DeLosso, M.A.
The University of Texas at Austin, 2010
SUPERVISOR: Melinda M. Mayer

This thesis was planned as a cross-case study of three docent-led museum tours, examined through the lens of liminality. The liminal, as identified by anthropologist Victor Turner, is an ambiguous and transitional state that is “betwixt and between” normative structures. When applied to the art museum, I argue that the liminal is a zone of negotiation that can assist in transformation and personal meaning making through a phenomenon of thought.

This study centers on the following questions: How can liminal theory, as applied to museum education, illuminate the relationships between gallery teachers, visitors, and objects? And, in what ways does liminality allow for visitors’ personal meaning making to occur?

These questions were answered through the planned observation of three docent-led museum tours at the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin. Video and audio recordings, as well as observational field notes, occurred in one museum gallery and focused on one artwork, Cildo Meireles’ *Missão/Missões (How to*

Build Cathedrals). Data was collected from narrative transcripts of the aforementioned video and audio recordings, exit interviews with docents, observational field notes taken during each tour, and observations and notes made while analyzing the video and audio footage. Two of these three tours fit within the parameters set by the researcher and, therefore, one tour was eliminated from the research findings.

Content analysis is utilized in this study. This type of data analysis placed information into three categories modeled after Arnold van Gennep’s rites de passage: separation, the liminal, and aggregation. Four subcategories were subsequently discovered during this analysis: observation, connection, realization, and transformation. Conclusions determined after the analysis of this data revealed fluidity between these stages. Additionally, liminal theory illuminated the relationships between visitors, objects, and museum educators in a way that stressed that the negotiation of the artwork, meaning making, and the process of transformation are part of a collaborative journey, and that the spaces “betwixt and between” are valuable for the advancement of museum education.

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

A seminal event in Western art history is Marcel Duchamp's creation of his readymade, *Fountain*, in 1917 (Barnitz, 1992). The artwork is, quite literally, an upside-down white porcelain urinal with the words, "R. Mutt" hastily written upon it in black paint. Duchamp's bold move challenged traditional judgments of not only what art was, but who it actually was that created the art object. In 1975, the Brazilian installation artist Cildo Meireles mused: "Duchamp's contribution today has the merit of forcing the perception of art, not as a perception of artistic objects but as a *phenomenon of thought*" (my emphasis) (Barnitz, 1992, p. 35).

Meireles' statement stresses three major ideas: first, that in creating the object, the artist helps to initiate the thought process. Second, that one's interpretative perception of an object is necessary in what defines it as art. Essentially, the relationship between the viewer and the object is crucial to the artwork. And finally, that the relationships between the artist, object, and viewer are active, magically transformative processes—phenomena.

In viewing many of Meireles' pieces, these three concepts are obvious. This artist crafts installations that compel viewers to interact with space and perception. They must enter various physical spaces and at the same time, confront personal emotions (Presnall, 2002). For Meireles, understanding an artwork means more than passively reading a label on a gallery wall; it is acting with, engaging in, and relating to the art through emotional processes of memories, stories, and dialogues, as well as through physical senses, such as smell, sound, taste, touch, and experience (Presnall, 2002). The Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica, a contemporary of Cildo Meireles, discusses art as "the live *act* of having an idea" (my emphasis) (Brett, 2003, p. 145). Art is, in and of itself, active. And as Ebitz

(2007) points out, when art begins to interact with other variables, such as the artist, the viewer, or even the museum environment, transactions and possibilities for learning are created.

These transactions cross over different realms and thresholds to form the said phenomenon of thought, thereby creating a *liminal* space—an ephemeral, transitioning space that is suspended "betwixt and between" (Turner, 1977, p. 95) preconceived ideas or hierarchies. Victor Turner (1977, 1982) created this anthropological theory of liminality as an adaptation of Arnold van Gennep's *rites de passage* (Belmont, 1974). The rites of passage occur when a society member engages in a personal process of transitioning from one stage in life to the next, maturing and growing in new ways. In museums, the liminal is similar, as it is a zone in which visitors and objects can engage in a transformative dialogue. The viewer of art, too, grows in new ways, both pedagogically and personally; new ideas and concepts are learned, while the museum visit is linked to ideas, social concepts, and individual experiences. The museum visitor evolves through a process of personal meaning making.

Carol Duncan (1994, 1995) stresses that this transformative dialogue is a ritual journey, where, in the past, the museum's main aim was to inculturate the individual in order to make him or her more intelligent. In entering the museum today, the process of seeing the art (and the transaction that occurs between the object and its viewer) still serves to effectively change the individual. This transaction is a participatory journey of memory and experience—and not simply one of culturing intelligence—for not only the viewer, but also the gallery teacher. Therefore, the visitor, object, and educator can transform, grow, and learn together under the lens of liminal theory.

Furthermore, Duncan (1994, 1995) writes that traditional, aesthetic museum praxis relies on a linear teaching methodology; that is, arriving at one, correct answer about the work of art. This modernist approach is undoubtedly object-centered, where meaning is based upon the object speaking from one viewpoint—such as that of the museum curator—and asks its viewers to engage in contemplation based on this monologic perspective (Duncan, 1995). In today's museum, there is a true need for a less linear model of understanding. It is necessary to find and cultivate active models that accept the view that individual insights can progress and scaffold into greater systems of personal meaning making.

Using the lens of liminal theory, I undertook this study in order to understand how museum visitors connect with the museum object and educator. The study utilized Meireles' 1987 artwork, *Missão/ Missões* (*How to Build Cathedrals)* as part of the research (see Figure 1). One of the objectives of this study was to observe how museum practice may benefit by perceiving practice within a liminal context, through the analysis and observation of three docent-led museum tours (after the collection of data for those three tours was completed, one was eliminated from my research; more information about this elimination can be found in Chapter Four). This first chapter discusses the central research questions of this thesis and justifies those questions with a problem statement. It then explains my personal and professional motivations for research. I then define principal terms and my research methodology, as well as the limitations that help to shape this study. And finally, I hypothesize about possible outcomes before delving into the second chapter's review of literature.

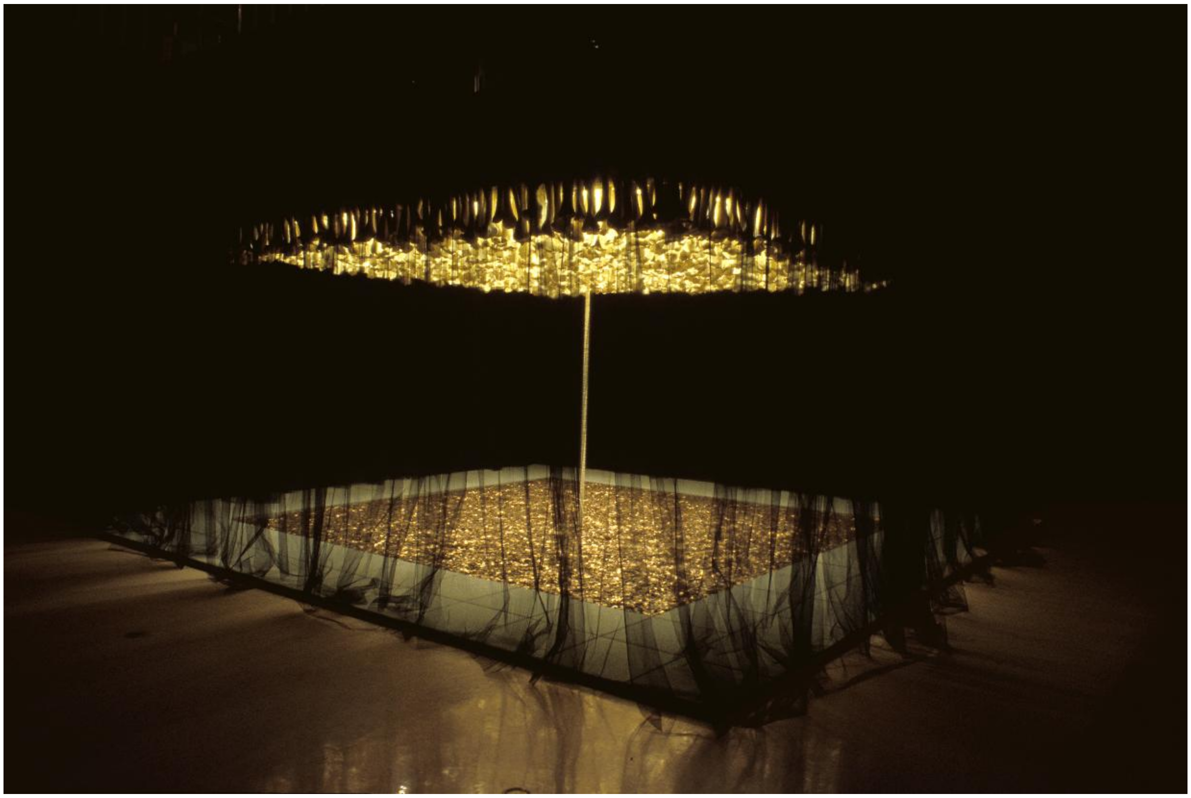


Figure 1. An image of Cildo Meireles'*Missão/Missões [Mission/Missions] (How to Build Cathedrals)*, 1987. Materials include 600,000 coins, 800 communion wafers, 2,000 cattle bones, 80 paving stones, and black cloth. Installation dimensions: 98 3/8 x 136 3/16 x 136 3/16 inches. Accession number: 1998. 76. Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin. Purchase from the artist with funds from the Peter Norton Family Foundation, 1998. Photograph by Rick Hall.

Central Research Questions

This study centers on the following questions: How can liminal theory, as applied to museum education, illuminate the relationships between gallery teachers, visitors, and objects? And, in what ways does liminality allow for visitors' personal meaning making to occur?

Problem Statement

In September 2009, while driving down Guadalupe Street in Austin, Texas, I noticed a banner outside of the Austin History Center that read "*your* story, *your* archive: an exhibit about the value of archives" (my emphasis). This script was placed underneath a graphic of the word "museum," with a large, red crossout emblazoned over it. The Austin History Center's exhibition was arguing, essentially, that it was not a museum. Instead, it cared about the public and contained bits and pieces of history that were personally relevant to the individual. Museums—as it was displayed for all to see on Guadalupe Street from August 11, 2009 to January 10, 2010—did not want to listen to individual stories because they only cared about curators, objects, and wall labels.

I argue that a postmodern approach to theory and practice is crucial in the advancement of museum education. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1994) identifies postmodernism as a pedagogy that is cognizant of multiple histories. It is characteristically fluid in its approach and acceptance of various perspectives. Its modernist counterpart, on the other hand, relies on certainty and validity of one account, something she calls the *grand narrative* or *metanarrative* (p. 71), which emphasizes a singular, universally correct story. She also categorizes the two approaches—as well as these types of museum visitors—with two words: active and passive, the former of which describes postmodernism; the latter, modernism.

I am not the first to suggest that a paradigm shift from the modernist museum to the *post-museum* (Mayer, 2007, quoting Hooper-Greenhill, 2000) is necessary in the advancement of this field. As museum educator Melinda Mayer points out in her 2007 article, “New Art Museum Education(s),” educators have been interested in new pedagogical approaches for at least thirty years. She cites the Getty Center for Education’s interest in and surveying of visitor’s viewpoints during the 1980s, for example. University of Georgia professor Carole Henry (2010) echoes Mayer’s (2007) history of museum education and additionally argues that visitors in this post-museum are “collaborator(s) in the construction of meaning” (p. 12). There has been advocacy for postmodern education and personal meaning making in museums for quite some time.

I find it necessary to contribute to this dialogue on postmodernity. I believe that there is another beneficial lens through which to examine museum education: liminality. This concept is significant in that it can democratize the object’s meaning for visitors through personally meaningful interactions. I support multiple meanings, perceptions, and viewpoints in the museum space for the sake of learning in a manner that is relevant to the individual. It is my belief that the continued advocacy, research, and possible practice of these approaches would negate the stigma that museums are uncomfortable and publicly unaccommodating. The Austin History Center’s point would be moot.

Denise B. Leach (2007) also identifies the necessity for the democratization of visitor’s perceptions, predominantly as one traverses through different museum spaces or galleries. In the museum, “a person may enter one or multiple place worlds” (p. 205), she writes. The *museum place,* according to Leach, is the blending of these physical places (such as objects and architecture) with virtual spaces (as in, memory or the construction of meaning). She goes on further: “This reality makes it necessary for educators to develop pedagogies and programs that anticipate and accommodate learners’ spatial needs” (p. 205). The field of museum education must encourage these new, active methods of thinking, learning, and teaching.

This study initially sought to explore liminal theory by analyzing three museum tours, in order to recognize how visitors connect with objects and the museum space, as well as with the museum educator. I aimed to understand how meaning was made. Furthermore, I sought to understand what benefits may exist when liminal theory was applied within the museum environment. I anticipated that it would create a more personalized learning experience for the museum visitor—and a more engaging overall practice for the museum educator.

Motivations for Research

Motivations for this research were both personal and professional. My strong interest in spatial environments can be attributed to my father, who is an architect. After many years of hard work, he now owns his own company that specializes in designing schools and learning institutions. He employs not only architects and engineers, but also former principals and superintendents of schools who serve as educational consultants. I inherently believe in a relationship between space and education. This thesis studied real—as in the artwork and the museum space itself—and virtual—meaning cognitive—thresholds that connected those realms together.

I also have a personal and professional interest invested in learning more about Latin American art, a genre to which I was not exposed while I studied art history at a large university in the northeastern United States. As part of this study, I researched the Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles and his use of liminal space.

I first professionally stumbled upon the topic of liminality in my graduate coursework with Dr. J. Ulbricht. I was writing a manuscript on after-school art activities and he mentioned that *third sites*, as defined by one of his mentors, Brent Wilson (2005, 2008), might be of interest to me. Wilson (2008) describes the third site as a comfortable zone that transcends traditional authority in the school or at home. Wilson's personal third site, where he could go and create art at will, was an art classroom storage closet. As I researched this topic in relation to after-school programs, I came across liminal theory—again with the aid and encouragement of Ulbricht—and I wondered about its implications in a museum setting. This study was a result of that curiosity.

Definition of Terms

I define the following terms in list format: liminal (theory), phenomenon of thought, and personal meaning making.

- Liminal (theory): Latin, meaning threshold. Initiated by Turner (1977, 1982). Is an expansion upon van Gennep's (Belmont, 1974; Deflem, 1991) *liminal* or *marginal/limen* phase in his proposed *rites of passage*. Liminal theory is a framework for understanding the transitory nature of the individual in various social states and spaces, such as the museum. For the purposes of this study, I defined the liminal as the area, transaction, state, or agent between the object and the viewer where the phenomenon of thought is illuminated.

- Phenomenon of thought: Quote from Cildo Meireles in 1975 (Barnitz, 1992). Referring to Marcel Duchamp’s contribution to the art world. In this study, the phenomenon of thought was the viewer’s interpretative space of perception of an object as art.
- Personal meaning making: For the purposes of this study, personal meaning making was the construction of meaning of an object, gathered from personal experiences, memories, thoughts, or beliefs. John Falk and Lynn Dierking’s (2000) *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and Making of Meaning* refers to several different facets of learning within this personal context: (a) “learning flows from appropriate motivational and emotional cues”; (b) “learning is facilitated by personal interest”; and perhaps most important to the definition of personal meaning making within this study: (c) “‘new’ knowledge is constructed from a foundation of prior experience and knowledge” (p. 16). The success of the visitor’s education within the museum environment is derived from personal meaning making, regardless of whether or not the visitor comes to these conclusions with or without assistance from a museum educator.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this study was initially designed to include a cross-case study of three docent-led museum tours at the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art in Austin, Texas. I submitted a proposal for this study to The University of Texas’

Institutional Review Board, or IRB, for approval regarding proper and ethical research methods. In this initial submission, I included my intent to study three museum tours. During the analysis of my data, I eliminated one tour from my research findings. Therefore, this thesis became a cross-case study of only two museum tours at the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art. More information about this omission is detailed in Chapter Four, *Liminality and the Tour Experience in the Museum*.

Docents for these tours were selected based upon their style of teaching; ideal candidates embraced many perspectives about the object in study, Cildo Meireles' *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)*. This group of gallery teachers served as a *purposive sample* (Patton, 1990) in my study, because I chose them specifically for the characteristics I detailed above.

Those participating in the museum tours as visitors were three groups of adults. My initial justifications for selecting adult groups instead of younger audiences were twofold. First, I believed that the adults and gallery teachers would be able to effectively work together to share in life experiences and memories—and engage in personal meaning making. I also felt that, while children are very intelligent, they may only have a very basic understanding of the concepts at work in Meireles' piece. For these reasons, I sought insight from adult visitors.

I enlisted the aid of a peer to videotape and audio record these tours. I took field notes and made observations about each of the tour groups, while they passed through the museum gallery. I also interviewed each of the docents at the conclusion of each tour; during this exit interview, I took notes, as well as utilized the proper electronic equipment to audio record the conversation between the docent and myself.

Immediately following, I watched and listened to the video and audio footage I had collected and made observations from what I had witnessed and heard. I then transcribed the narrative from this footage into text. Additionally, I transcribed each of the docent interviews. Once all of this data was collected, I coded this information into a series of categories using content analysis. These categories were modeled after Arnold van Gennep's (Belmont, 1974; Deflem, 1991) *rites de passage*, from the study and review of scholarly literature on liminal theory. From those results, I was able to extrapolate findings, make conclusions, and answer the central research questions posited previously in this chapter. Further details regarding the exact procedures for the collection and evaluation of data from these museum tours can be found in Chapter Four of this thesis.

Limitations

The most fundamental caveat of this study was that the docents were not trained in or informed about liminal theory. There were two major reasons for this limitation: first, there is no formal praxis of liminality in the museum to this point. This thesis was preliminary to any sort of practice. I wanted to observe a standard tour and witness how learning was facilitated in the museum environment.

Second, and perhaps most importantly, if docents were to learn about liminal theory, it would effectively place them at an even higher position of authority over the visitors in the tour group. This positioning was undesirable for this study, as my central research question served to illuminate the relationships between gallery teachers, visitors, and objects. I did not want to highlight the systems of power within the museum—rather, I aimed to recognize how these parties could collaborate in the construction of knowledge and meaning.

I had to concede that there were already several powerful entities within this research experiment; Meireles, for example, was already authoritarian, as he created the installation and had clear artistic license and intent. As the researcher, I, too, was in a position of authority; I evaluated tours within a liminal framework and I have studied this theory throughout my graduate work at The University of Texas. However, I believed that if the docent was placed at a level that was similar to the visitor, they could together navigate the real and virtual spaces in between—Meireles and myself; the black mesh curtain inside and outside of the artwork; the darkly lit gallery and the surrounding, bright rooms; old memories and new experiences; and other liminal zones.

Additionally, other limitations were that I studied liminality in relation to just one artist, Cildo Meireles; one artwork, *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)*; in one museum, The Blanton Museum of Art; through three docent-led tours. As noted previously, this study examined only two of those tours in depth.

Hypotheses

There were several hypotheses and speculations I had about this study as I began. First, I believed that conceptualizing the museum within a liminal framework would benefit and strengthen the relationship between the museum educator and the visitor; I thought that sharing memories and experiences in a dialogic exchange could help create a strong bond of trust between these two parties. Art educators are already beginning to recognize the richness in this topic. It is evidenced in the theme of the November 2007 volume of the journal of the National Art Education Association, *Art Education*. The theme for this particular issue was: *in-between* (Taylor, 2007).

I also believed that highlighting *Missão/ Missões* (*How to Build Cathedrals)* under this liminal framework would create new meanings and associations that would enrich the artwork—and the museum experience—further. Additionally, I suspected that the lens of liminality could aid museum educators in understanding not only how visitors engage with art objects, but also how those visitors create meaning.

Moreover, I also expected that Cildo Meireles' *Missão/ Missões* (*How to Build Cathedrals)* would lend itself well to the concept of liminality, as the artist constantly strives to recognize the exchanges between his artwork and the viewers of it. And finally, I believed in the potential for this theory to illuminate other art objects—not simply Meireles' piece—and experiences for both the visitor and gallery teacher.

Summation of Chapter One and a Look Ahead to Chapter Two

This introductory chapter has established the pertinence of liminal theory in the field of museum education. It has done so by first identifying a term found within the title of this thesis, the *phenomenon of thought*, as the viewer's interpretative space of perception of an object as art. This chapter argued that there is educational value in recognizing and observing that space, as well as the spaces between it.

I constructed two central research questions based on these concepts. This pair of inquiries was concerned with the relationships between the visitor, museum educator, and the art object, as well as how visitors' personal meaning making was realized under the lens of liminal theory. I qualified the need for asking these queries through my problem statement, in which I referenced the differences between modern and postmodern museum education, as well as the current stigma surrounding this discipline.

Additionally, I mentioned my own personal and professional motivations for researching this particular issue; one of those motivations, for example, was to learn more about Latin American art. My study included the observation of three museum tours examining Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles' *Missão/Missões (How to Build Cathedrals).* I then defined key terms in this study, which included *liminal theory*, the *phenomenon of thought*, and *personal meaning making*.

This chapter also outlined an abridged version of my methodology for collecting and analyzing data, and addressed the limitations of this research—which included the observation of visitors in one gallery space, for instance. Finally, I hypothesized the possible outcomes of this study. The next chapter is a review of literature, which will serve to further support my beliefs about liminal theory's importance in multiple facets of museum education.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

This chapter is a comprehensive review of pertinent literature to this study. I begin with a discussion of Victor Turner and then follow with his successors, who further developed his theory of liminality. The chapter then examines relationships of real and virtual space, as well as their implications in the museum setting. The chapter also reviews the theory in educational practice. It closes with a discussion of how museum educators and visitors might traverse the liminal space together.

Victor Turner: The Initiator of Liminal Theory

The most prominent author of liminal theory is Victor Turner (1977, 1982). His theory focuses on social ritual, dramas, and acting in everyday life. In *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1977), for example, he ethnographically studies African Ndembu rituals in relation to rites of passage through the tribe's sacred hierarchy. Turner's study originally elaborated on Arnold van Gennep's three *rites de passage*: *separation*, *liminal*, and *aggregation* (Belmont, 1974; Deflem, 1991). Deflem (1991, citing Turner, 1968) defines these three phases as the following:

> Separation or the pre-liminal…[is] when a person or group becomes detached from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or from an earlier set of social conditions; [the] margin or the liminal [is] when the state of the ritual subject is ambiguous; [the ritual subject] is no longer in the old state and has not yet reached the new one; and…aggregation or the post-liminal [is] when the ritual subject enters a new stable state with its own rights and obligations. (p. 6)

Van Gennep theorized that individuals transitioned through life by a series of ceremonies and rituals (Belmont, 1974; Deflem, 1991). Turner's (1977) work focused on van Gennep's liminal stage, derived from the Latin word *limen,* meaning threshold. As Deflem (1991) elaborates, all three of these stages acknowledge how the individual undergoes a transformation through the rites de passage. Turner's (1977) liminal theory essentially searches for meanings in between these stages.

As Turner (1977) notes, "liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremon[y]" (p. 95). The liminal site is not relegated to one space or another; it is physically and metaphorically between juxtaposed aspects of cultural rituals or customs. Turner (1982) expands upon this concept in *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, where he posits that the liminal is suspended between stages of authoritarian principles or cultural norms, creating a transitional space for the individual to learn, play, and perform. He also discusses a concept called the *liminoid*. The liminoid is a microcosmic feature of liminal theory; humans mature and bond through smaller rituals, such as games or sports—or touring an art museum together. However, in navigating through both of these experiences, the individual is transformed from one rite to the next.

Absolutely intriguing and central to the title of this thesis is the following quote from Marjorie Wilson (1977), who quotes Turner's characterization on the liminal as something quite magical: the liminal "is a way of cognition in which the identifying qualities of one thing are transferred in an *instantaneous,* almost *unconscious, flash of insight* to some other thing that is, by remoteness or complexity, *unknown to us*" (my emphasis) (p. 20). Negotiating the liminal creates a sublimation of experience and knowledge. This is, unquestionably, the phenomenon of thought.

While navigating through this process, one may or may not be cognizant of the changes occurring and the meaning making realized within oneself, until suddenly, there is an epiphany. New knowledge is constructed. The space where this synaptic firing and process of learning occurs is quite valuable to the educator, as it forces us to question how we might go about cultivating this experience within the museum. Wilson's quote asserts that while the liminal is gray and nebulous in nature, it does hold an undeniable amount of richness when studying a work of art. In undergoing this process of learning and coming face-to-face with this space, the individual has the capacity to transform.

After Turner: The Expansion of Liminal Theory

Carol Duncan (1994) expands upon these concepts, as she utilizes Turner's (1977, 1982) liminal theory in her examination of museums as places of civilizing ritual and performance. In the article "Art Museums and the Rituals of Citizenship," Duncan claims that museums not only parallel temples, shrines, and ritual sites in their appearance (museum buildings often mimic classic Greco-Roman architecture in their large-scale pediments and columns, for example), but also in function. Museum visitors often engage in a transformative, mentally accessible process of enlightenment, as the museum realm urges individuals to question their identities and past experiences in relation to objects and space. "And like traditional ritual sites," writes Duncan, "museum space is carefully marked off and culturally designated as special, reserved for a particular kind of contemplation and learning experience and demanding a special quality of attention—what Victor Turner called liminality" (p. 91). Museums demand a ritual-like performance from their visitors.

Duncan (1995) delves further into these complex ideas in her book, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*, in which she continues to look at ritual structures and museum space. She claims that the fundamental meaning of the museum is based on its carefully codified institutional ceremony, where the visitors act and participate in a series of structured events and prescribed manners, such as walking—but not running—or looking at the work of art—but not touching it. These movements and actions are part of a ritual, in which the visitor is the actor and "the museum's sequenced spaces and arrangements of objects, its lighting, and architectural details provide both the stage set and the script" (p. 12). One can see how Duncan's beliefs parallel Turner's (1977, 1982) thoughts on ritual and dramatic performance, as well as how her ideas echo Meireles' concept that the viewer does more than viewing. The viewer is actually a participant in the artwork and the museum space.

Duncan (1995) also notes that the museum space is "sacralized" (p. 17) through its sparseness of objects. In Meireles' *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals),* this sacrosanct aura is evident through the gallery's dim lighting, black mesh, and golden glow of precious pennies, heightened by the quiet, slow navigation of the museum visitor. The connotation of this warm space is much more than a gallery—it transforms into a religious setting of a cathedral (hence the title of the work), temple, or place of worship that compels its participants to question conventional and contemporary rituals and traditions, especially in relation to oneself. Time is suspended as the visitor undergoes a "mental journey" (p. 19) of personal meaning making through various liminal spaces.

James Clifford (1992), an anthropologist and professor in the History of Consciousness Department at the University of California, Santa Cruz, echoes several of these concepts, as his article "Museums in the Borderlands" cites Duncan's (1994, 1995) earlier ideas when studying the U'mista Cultural Center in Alert Bay, British Columbia. He observes the importance of how the museum is structured physically: objects are grouped together, the lighting is lowered, and traditional labels are large white cards with personal stories and texts chosen by those within the cultural community. The physical manifestation of the museum space, though, has a considerable amount of metaphorical meaning, too, as Clifford writes that, "the space between label and objects [is] widened dramatically, thus openly soliciting the viewer's constructive role" (p. 128). The visitor is asked to become part of an active process in reconstructing history, events, and cultural ideals. While the "evocative space between objects and texts" (p. 128) here can make some uncomfortable, Clifford welcomes the process of personal understanding through a liminal framework, versus a linear, monologic, or hegemonically-charged viewpoint. One may recognize that the area between the borderlands—the space left in between two opposite powers—can be rich in meaning.

Renowned cultural theorist Homi K. Bhabha (1994) also values the "in-between" (p. 5), as he defines the liminal as a gray area or *third space*, which is suspended amidst our traditional concepts of physical space. The author, like Clifford (1992), is interested in the theory as it relates to cultural and ethnic classifications. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha (1994) theorizes that traditional types of identity collapse to give way to new interactions and connections between humans.

A notable part of this work is the author's analysis of artist Renée Green's installation, *Sites of Genealogy*, at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Long Island, New York. Green creates architectural spaces—such as an attic, a staircase, and a boiler room—to emphasize "binary divisions" (p. 5) of high and low, black and white, or heaven and hell. Bhabha (1994) defines Green's staircase as a liminal channel between dual opposing forces, stressing the flow between self and other, effectively driving at one of the main ideas present in the artwork.

Meireles' art installation, *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)*, also emphasizes oppositions between disparate entities: notably, the church, wealth, and indigenous tribes of South America. The artist utilizes two unlike aspects of the piece—pennies and cattle bones—and connects them with a line of communion wafers. The wafers, like Green's staircase, serve as a liminal component that stresses the polarization of these two worlds. The importance of Bhabha's (1994) analysis of Green's work is twofold: first, that viewing art compels individuals to recognize various forms of identity, class, and division; and, second, that the object can have meaning through some type of liminal framework or lens.

Liminality in Real and Virtual Space

Bhabha (1994) is a reviewer for author Victor Burgin's (1996) *In/Different Spaces*, which studies visual culture through different lenses of social, philosophical, and psychoanalytic theory. Burgin relies heavily on theorists Sigmund Freud, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Henri Lefebvre, and Jean-Paul Sartre, amongst others, throughout his work. Several aspects of this book are particularly interesting and enlightening for this thesis, the first of which is the title. *In/Different Spaces* contains a slash, a punctuation mark that represents a connection between two different words. In traditional English, the slash can mean "and" or, "or," as in, there is more than one way to view something. The slash provides an option, instead of a monologic perspective—there is no "right" answer. And in viewing art and educating others about art, I argue that options and multiple viewpoints are more enriching in achieving personal meaning making than one correct answer.

Additionally, David Ebitz's (2007) transacting theory and A/r/t/ography (Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Xiong, & Bickel, 2006) utilize the slash. Ebitz's usage of this punctuation mark indicates the concept of active reciprocity—hence the name, transacting theory—occurring within museum education, through the employment of a participle. For example, the relationship between the individual and the object can be observed through the word "perceiving" (Ebitz, 2007, p. 27), such as the individual perceiving the object, or the object perceiving the individual. The form that would represent this reciprocity would be: individual/perceiving/object.

A/r/t/ography's reliance on the slash is best exemplified in the following passage from Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Xiong, and Bickel's (2006) article, "The Rhizomatic Relations of A/r/t/ography." The definition follows:

> The name itself exemplifies these features by setting art and graphy, and the identities of artist, researcher, and teacher (a/r/t), in contiguous relations. *None of these features is privileged over another as they occur simultaneously in and through time and space*. Moreover, the acts of inquiry and the three identities resist modernist categorizations and instead exist as post-structural conceptualizations of practice (my emphasis). (p. 3)

The slash transforms from a mere punctuation mark to an inquiry-based tool for education. It stresses the importance of relationships between different realms, as it focuses not on the fixation of an entity, but rather on its situational context. The slash in Burgin's (1996) book title, as well as in Ebitz's (2007) transacting theory and a/r/t/ography, shifts emphasis from *what* to *when* (Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Xiong, & Bickel, 2006).

It is clearly more than a punctuation mark for all three of these examples. The slash suggests that the space and transition from one word to the next is worth examining. It can help increase understanding and promote learning through inquiry-based experiences and different outlooks (Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Xiong, & Bickel, 2006) in one's world.

Burgin (1996) even discusses the history of space, stretching all the way back to Euclid and Galileo. The writer argues that space initially was thought of as something infinite and unknown. Our concept of space today, however, is traced back to Galileo, who literally placed our planet within the context of other planets. Humans learned to favor "localization" over "extension" (p. 41). We were taught to prefer one fixed point and every idea revolving around that fixed point, instead of infinite or endless possibilities.

It is valuable, though, to look beyond—and even in between—spaces to learn new things. As Burgin (1996) quotes Freud, there is "another locality…the idea of another space…*between perception and consciousness*" (Burgin's emphasis) (p. 47). This concept is termed *psychical space* and it clearly references the liminal. It values, again, new perspectives and gray areas versus the traditional, standardized way of viewing the world. Turner (1977, 1982) and Marjorie Wilson (1977) refer to this standardized viewpoint as *normative structure*. Its opposite is *anti-structure* (Turner, 1977, 1982; Wilson, 1977).

Marjorie Wilson (1977) applies Victor Turner's (1977, 1982) liminal theory throughout her Doctoral dissertation, "Passage through Communitas: An Interpretive Analysis of Enculturation in Art Education." She weaves text from novelist Italo Calvino throughout the work. She also focuses on Turner's concepts of structure and anti-structure while utilizing journals, notes, interviews, and drawings in her research methodology.

Wilson defines the term anti-structure, through Turner, as the "dissolution of normative social structure" (p. 2). She then goes on to expand this definition, through Brian Sutton-Smith's theory of normative structure, as "the latent system of potential alternatives from which novelty will arise when contingencies in the normative system require it" (p. 2). Anti-structure is the opposite of a structured activity or occurrence. Wilson (1977) gives her readers several examples of this concept, one of which follows: if a child were offered sugary ice cream for all three meals, everyday of the week, he or she would soon yearn for a classic meal of steak and potatoes. Essentially, anti-structure is something that exists outside of the normal or the routine. And there is clearly a need for anti-structure, because opposing forces are ubiquitous in nature (for example, she refers to yin and yang). Wilson cautions, though, that the prefix "anti" should not result in a negative connotation. It simply implies the duality between the two terms.

Central to this thesis is how Wilson relates these concepts of structure and anti-structure to the art classroom. She writes,

> Even as the school is a microcosm of society, so the world of the art room is a microcosm of the universe of the high school. Each is subject to the same tensions; the same oppositions are at work—order and disorder, the acceptable and the forbidden. One does not leave the tensions and the frustrations of the school behind upon crossing the threshold of the room, but it *can* become a place where the reduction of tensions becomes possible, where evasion and rule-breaking are acceptable. *Setting the room apart, outside of the regulating, constraining structure is the very nature of art itself* (my emphasis). (p. 13)

Art inherently allows its viewers and creators freedom outside normal, constricting structures. Museum educational theorists John Falk and Lynn Dierking (2000) reassert this idea within museum education, too, in their book *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*. They detail the promising nature of attending the museum for leisure or enjoyment. Individuals can visit the museum and engage in free-choice learning, which the authors define as non-linear, personally motivated, and accommodating of the individual's choice and control of the museum experience. These concepts stand in direct opposition with the Austin History Center's claim that the museum is publicly unaccommodating and ignorant of visitor's individual perceptions.

There is a stigma that museums are not enjoyable, and that learning in a personally relevant way is impossible. This assumption acts as if museum staffs approach art as something to be captured, pinpointed, and taught exclusively from one viewpoint. Marjorie Wilson's husband, Brent Wilson (2005, 2008), addresses these same issues nearly three decades after her original dissertation and research. I would not be so brazen as to suggest that museums or museum education has not advanced at all in the past thirty years, but I do think these discrepancies present the necessity to view the "meaning" of an artwork less myopically and to allow for different methods of learning—as well as a new way to look at the museum, albeit through liminality or another lens.

In "Contemporary Art, the *Best of Art*, and Third-Site Pedagogy," art educator Brent Wilson (2008) discusses his own experiences with anti-structure. His article describes new ways in which he was able to view the world through his interactions with art. He reminisces about his personal, voluntary experiences with contemporary art in an art classroom storage closet, a site secured to him by his elementary art teacher. This became a physical *third site*, one that fueled new opportunities (Bhabha, 1994; Wilson, 2008)—separate from both the structure of the school curriculum and the comforts of his home. In addition, it was a metaphorical third site, one that emotionally removed Wilson from imposed hierarchy (Bhabha, 1994) or structure and let him channel his creativity in the solace of his own artworks.

This storage closet is a liminal space and appropriately, Wilson (2008) consults Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994) and Turner's *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (1982) when discussing the concept of the third site. Wilson, though, makes the idea of the third site more tangible for readers than Bhabha's (1994) and Turner's (1977, 1982) description of the liminal, as he is able not only to craft his theory into an enjoyable anecdote, but also relate the complex concept to something as architecturally familiar—and lowbrow—as a storage closet (also, a similarly anecdotal and enjoyable reference to liminal theory is Matthew R. Smith's 2009 national art project, *The Spaces Between Your Fingers Project*, where the author reminisces about his grandfather).

Architecture is paramount in Australian artist, architect, and interior designer Catherine Smith's (n.d.) essay, "Looking for Liminality in Architectural Space." The author defines liminality as an ephemeral interaction between humans and various sites. She relates the liminal to fixed building structures, calling for open transactions between the building environment and the human passage. Smith supports her essay with the idea that contemporary installation art relies heavily on the audience's experience. This idea is similar to Meireles' Neoconcretist viewpoint that the work of art exists because of the visitor's interpretation and perception of the object (Presnall, 2002). Smith (n.d.) illuminates the exchange between viewer, object, and fixed architectural space. I expand upon this concept to include socially fixed structures, as in, the curatorial label on the wall, next to the installation art work—which as Duncan (1995) notes, may also become part of the art in a liminal framework, because boundaries are inherently blurred.

Smith (2003) additionally references Australian feminist and theorist Elizabeth Grosz (2001) in her online publication, “Between-ness: Theory and Practice within the Margins of Excess.” In reviewing Grosz’s (2001) work, *Architecture from the Outside*, one may note how she explores architecture within a third realm or *third space*, as identified by Bhabha (1994) and Wilson (2005, 2008). The word “outside” in Grosz’s (2001) title may make clever reference to Roland Barthes’ (Allen, 2003) concept of looking “outside of the text” (p. 82), a philosophical idea arguing that any understanding or analysis of writing is more than intertextual (Reese, 2001). In order to interpret any writing, the reader has to move outside the text and understand it through his or her own personal emotions, biases, or experiences. Essentially, the text has no meaning until someone actually reads and interprets it. This is similar to the Neoconcrete principle that a work of art needs assistance and interaction from its viewers for its meaning (Presnall, 2002).

While Grosz (2001) makes subtle reference to the liminal throughout her work, she specifically nails it in chapter six, “In-Between: The Natural in Architecture and Culture” (pp. 91-105). She defines the space of the in-between as “that which is not a space, a space without boundaries of its own, which takes on and receives itself, its form, from the outside” (p. 91). Gray sites are at the very heart of liminal theory. Turner (1977, 1982) even used this term, *in-between*, to help bolster and describe his own work. Particularly interesting about Grosz’s description of the in-between is her claim that this space “is the locus for social, cultural, and natural transformations” (p. 92). If I were to relate her work to Carol Duncan's (1994, 1995) ideas about transformation in the museum, the reader of this thesis would recognize, yet again, that the liminal has the possibility to enlighten or change individuals. And if I were to expand that concept into education, it would beg the following questions: what are the possibilities for developing a working praxis around this theory? How might museum educators give their visitors and pupils a more enlightening, transforming experience? The very beginnings of answers to those complex questions lay at the heart of this thesis.

Implications of Real and Virtual Spaces within the Museum

Michigan State University Doctoral student Denise B. Leach (2007) emphasizes the relationship between architectural, physical, and emotional space in her study, "Dynamic Museum Place: Exploring the Multi-Dimensional Museum Environment"—a work I consider absolutely critical in my study. She acknowledges that while the museum contains a physical place, there is also part of the museum that "begs to be identified" (p. 198). This unidentified space is, as I have theorized throughout this thesis, the liminal. While Leach does not directly label this realm as such, her essay's associations to it are obvious: "If the concept of place is expanded," she writes, "it becomes possible to envision different kinds of place in the museum: tangible places that exist in physical space and intangible places, created through the articulation of memory and human thought" (p. 198). One can see the presence of liminality and the aforementioned phenomenon of thought in Leach's concepts, as well as the possibilities for personal meaning making within (and between) these spaces.

Leach (2007) discusses the liminal as four different domains of museum place, which she defines as a multidimensional environment of virtual and physical spaces that connect objects and memory with the museum visitor. These four domains are: (a) *origin*; (b) *creation*; (c) *display*; and (d) *experiencer-object*.

The *origin* domain is intriguing in that it is the physical place where the object initially came to have meaning. For most art objects, this space is in the artist's studio. However, for installation artwork, such as Meireles' *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals),* the origin domain exists in the museum itself. Meanwhile, the *creation* domain is the virtual place where the artist crafts the object. And for Meireles' installation artwork, this, too, would be in the museum itself.

Of interest here is how Leach (2007) believes that the object is essentially personified—it has a biography—and the artist gives birth to, or imbues a personal meaning upon, his or her object. The object and viewer can engage in a liminal dialogue or conversation and exchange their life stories, similar to Charles Garoian's (2001) beliefs on autobiographical performance and reciprocity in the museum. Like Leach (2007), Garoian (2001) recognizes how the object and the visitor can inform one another by sharing their narratives. The object is given a voice—and in turn, so is the visitor.

Leach (2007) goes on to describe the *display* domain, where the object exists physically within the museum and in relation to people, as well as to other objects. Rich connections and meanings are embedded within the display domain. *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)* juxtaposes pennies, black mesh, cattle bones, and communion wafers within its darkly lit display, thus creating a myriad of associations for viewers. And, when memory, learning, and meaning-making converge, one enters the *experiencer-object* domain as an agent of personal interaction. In Meireles' piece, the entire gallery serves as the object; upon entering this space, the viewer negotiates his or her transaction with the entire room. Will he or she decide to move the black mesh curtain and walk into the space, or stay outside of it and view it from afar? Leach reminds the reader that how one experiences the object and the museum undoubtedly affects how one may understand them.

Another advocate of multidimensional components in museum education is Elizabeth B. Reese (2001). In her Doctoral dissertation *"*From Static to Dynamic Interpretations: Transforming Art Museums Exhibitions through Intertextual Narrative Pedagogical Processes," Reese examines intertextual and narrative forms of education in the museum. These pedagogical practices advocate the democratization of art objects through personal experiences, dialogic interactions, and individual interpretations. A captivating aspect of this research is how Reese begins her study. She does so with the description of a museum wall label and then asks the following: "'What opinions do people other than the curator have about these works of art?'; 'What do these works of art mean to me?'; 'How do they connect to me and to my life?'; and, 'How do they relate to the lives of others?"' (p. 3). She then designs a series of case studies that enable participants to rewrite a museum exhibition. In doing so, this group is able to avoid the *single narrative explanation* of the object. A single narrative explanation consists of only one viewpoint and ignores an object's multiple stories. It is a structured and authoritarian outlook. Most museums cater to the single narrative explanation; the wall label that Reese describes, for example, is quite often the most prominent piece of literature next to an art object. Audio lectures or pamphlets may accompany the label, but they usually play a supporting, ancillary role. Reese searches for other ways to create stories and relationships in the museum setting and attempts to change the single narrative into one that is intertextual. In doing so, the author undoubtedly acknowledges both the visitor's and the educator's capability to learn and transform.

Novelist Barbara Kingsolver's (1995) essay "The Spaces Between" describes these issues from a visitor's perspective. Additionally, the author expands upon the concept of liminality and offers deep, candid insight into what she specifically wants to learn from her visit to the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona. The author recounts the drive from Tucson to Phoenix with her five year old daughter, Camille. During the drive, they pass through the Gila River Reserve. While the Native American reservation is the oldest of its type in the United States, there is nothing—physically, at least—that separates its landscape from the rest of the American highway or government. And yet there is something special about it, as it forces Kingsolver to question the meaning of ethnicity and culture. The author taps into the very heart of Clifford's (1992) anthropological commentary on culture and the Borderlands and Bhabha's (1994) examination of the liminal.

Additionally, Kingsolver's ideas parallel Leach's (2007) arguments about the museum space. Kingsolver (1995) laments that museums are too often sight-based, even if they claim to be multisensory through the addition of sound to an exhibit. Leach (2007), too, values the need for dynamic and multidimensional methods of learning in museums through the term described earlier, *museum place*, as well as looking at objects through four different lenses: *origin*, *creation*, *display*; and *experiencer-object*.

Kingsolver clearly advocates learning through these different types of museum place. This is obvious when the author discusses that Native American art is all too often taken out of its context or initial, practical purpose and instead inaccurately viewed as a spiritual, God-like relic. She acutely understands that a museum not only houses artifacts, it also contains actual *pieces of life*. “We go [to museums] expecting dead things, explained to us in flat, condescending voices” (p. 153), she says. Visitors often fail to recognize an artifact’s own life story and origins. Museums inherently swim “upstream” (p.153), as they fight the biased stigma that old objects have little personal relevance to a visitor’s current life. I personally stumbled upon this same bias when I witnessed the Austin History Center’s sign on Guadalupe Street; the words “your story” were coupled with a crossout graphic over the word “museum,” suggesting that museums are ignorant of personal stories and histories.

Kingsolver (1995) goes on to proclaim that a museum visit can include, in addition to physical space, an emotional type of space. When discussing her visit to the Heard Museum, Kingsolver remarks, “the gallery is designed, I think, to stop in our tracks those of us who take transience for granted. It tells an extraordinary tale of *human landscapes* cradled and shaped by physical ones” (my emphasis) (p. 151). *Human landscapes*. *Museum place*. Or, as Gaynor Kavanagh (2000) calls it, the *dream space*. All of those are beautiful terms for a liminal type of space that allows for different types of understanding. Because, as Kingsolver effortlessly writes, “I want to know about the places where disparate points of view rub together—the spaces between” (p. 154).

Liminality in Educational Praxis

These spaces between are valuable in the construction of knowledge. Yet as Washington State University professor David Gruenewald (2003) notes, traditional methods of education teach students to value structure and power within the school and subsequently, within society. Gruenewald claims in his article, “Foundations of Place: A

Multidisciplinary Framework for Place-Conscious Education," that, "the hidden or implicit agenda is that in its lack of attention to spatial forms, education functions to maintain geographical relations of domination" (p. 629). The author urges his readers to embrace *place-based education,* a concept advocated by educational theorist David Sobel (2006), in which students' communities—ergo, culture, spaces, or places—can serve as a primary instructional tool for learning. Local community, narratives, and experiences are respected.

Gruenewald (2003) writes, "A theory of place that is concerned with the quality of human-world relationships must first acknowledge that places themselves have something to say. Human beings, in other words, must learn to listen (and otherwise *perceive*)" (my emphasis) (p. 624). The author recognizes that real and virtual spaces are charged with ripe opportunities for learning. He argues that humans should distance themselves from traditional pedagogical practices that value one correct, final—and authoritative—answer. He emphasizes that individuals must learn different ways of viewing the world by examining space as more than the background; it is a contributor to dialogue and experience.

As a professor of education at Haverford College, Alison Cook-Sather (2006) also focuses on new ways of viewing educational methods and practices in her article, "Newly Betwixt and Between: Revising Liminality in the Context of a Teacher Preparation Program." The article utilizes liminal theory in relation to student teacher development and practice. Cook-Sather aptly describes the liminal space as "the place within which the transition unfolds, (which) is an 'in-between' place that bridges 'what is' and 'what can or will be'" (p. 110), akin to the notion that the object and the viewer must work together to form meaning. Namely, how the object comes to have meaning within a liminal framework for the visitor.

Cook-Sather analyzes emails between mentor teachers and her student teachers over an eight month period. She expertly notes that her younger student teachers self-actualize their identities through email correspondence, which is less dialogically formal than a meeting. Email exists parallel to students' personal and professional identities. Hence, the pre-service students reflect on their sense of self and grow through the liminal space. The author relates liminal theory to pedagogical practice. This concept is similar to art educator B. Stephen Carpenter II's (2009) thoughts on virtual space.

At the Texas Art Education Association's annual conference, Carpenter (2009) discussed a web-based program (in which users maintain a secondary form of identity or avatar in an online, virtual realm) called Second Life in his presentation titled, "Contemporary Visual Culture: Art, Education, and Curriculum in the Metaverse." This piqued my interest for two reasons, both of which relate to Cook-Sather (2006). First, Carpenter (2009) described Second Life as a computer program that enables users—including both students and professors—to construct their own identities and meet in the *metaverse*. The metaverse refers to a virtual space in Neal Stephenson's 1992 novel, *Snow Crash*, which is a work of science fiction about humans and avatars. Both Cook-Sather (2006) and Carpenter (2009) acknowledge the existence of a liminal, gray realm, as well as the presence of other selves that exist in different settings.

Second—and perhaps most importantly—Carpenter recognized the importance of that realm within an educational context. He challenged his audience by asking, "*what might this virtual space offer for instruction?*" (my emphasis). Cook-Sather, too, understands the implications of combining liminal theory, virtual space, and educational practice to enhance knowledge and identity. In fact, I would argue that the cultivation of new knowledge and identity is crucial during any rite of passage. These two concepts aid this study invaluably, as I also aim to conceptualize museum education within a liminal framework.

Assisting my development of liminal theory is museum educator David Ebitz (2007), who writes about *transacting theory*. As the author notes, transacting theory searches for meaning between "fixed positions" (p. 26), negating traditional theories that focus on one aspect of museum education, such as the object, or the individual. Ebitz explains further: "In openings between these theories, we may discover processes that animate the relationships between the people and ideas and the objects and contexts on which these theories focus" (p. 27). Ebitz's transacting theory juxtaposes five common museum education theoretical foci: (a) *object*; (b) *discipline*; (c) *individual*; (d) *society*; and (e) *context*. He compares, for example, the object to the individual as: object/individual. Ebitz then inserts a participle in between these two foci, such as object *informing* the individual, to search for meaning amongst the two realms.

Central to transacting theory is the idea that a transaction is fluid in both directions. In the example above, the individual can inform the object, much like Meireles' belief that the object and viewer exist because of one another (Presnall, 2002). Ebitz's (2007) transacting theory makes the liminal useful through the juxtaposition of these terms, as well as the idea that it is an active exchange between parties.

Of further interest is the way in which Ebitz begins his essay. He recounts past theories in the field of museum education and then weaves a metaphor of the museum educator as a bridge between viewer and object, begging the question: is it possible that the museum educator, spanning the threshold between these two realms, is a physical embodiment of, or initiator to, the liminal space? The answer could be in this study.

Navigating the Liminal Together

As mentioned previously, Pennsylvania State University professor Charles Garoian (2001) studies narrative and performance within the museum. His "Performing the Museum" notes that museums traditionally resist dialogic interactions between viewers and artifacts. The conventional museum model is inherently monologic, focusing on one story or one meaning; he proposes a discourse between the viewer and the object. He clearly cites Reese (2001) as a contributor to this article.

Of particular interest is Garoian's (2001) interpretation of Roland Barthes' comparison between the brain and the museum in two ways: the brain as an actual object, to be studied and collected; and the brain as a corporeal, museum-like institution that accessions pieces of memory. Garoian further expands upon the brain concept and states that the whole body is the museum, as an agent that can perform and treasure thoughts like artifacts. He also compares the liminal site to a "reflexive loop" (p. 241), where new memories and meanings participate continually. The author writes that the reflexive loop is "not a fixed experience, but contingent *upon* the existential circumstances of their encounter" (my emphasis) (p. 241), thereby resulting in a phenomenon of thought, where the viewer's perception of the object—and all of the personal narratives the viewer possesses as well—are paramount in the museum ritual.

Art educators Sarah Wilson McKay's and Susana R. Monteverde's (2003) "Dialogic Looking: Beyond the Mediated Experience" utilizes viewers' personal observations and memories to expand upon formal museum education. The authors define *dialogic looking* as “exploring works of art through multiple dialogues as an integral component, and perhaps alternative to, mediated museum experiences” (p. 40). McKay and Monterverde point out that curatorial dialogue is not the only type of conversation that can occur in the museum. First and foremost, there is the discussion viewers have with each other or a museum docent. Second, there is internal dialogue, which includes thoughts, feelings, and personal observations and questions, such as “what is it?” or “why is it made this way?” These are similar to the questions Reese (2001) asked during her dissertation. And finally, there is a third discourse occurring with the art itself. This final type of exchange recognizes that, as Leach (2007) and Garoian (2001) note, art has a biography. This form of dialogue also encourages an active role from the viewer. Dialogic looking creates a multifaceted experience with art for museum visitors.

Authors McKay and Monteverde (2003) elaborate on their argument by defining *heteroglossia*, or many-voicedness. They credit Russian sociolinguist Mikhail Bakhtin for employing this concept in 1981. Heteroglossia, like dialogic looking, also emphasizes multiple viewpoints in the museum. It is, as Bakhtin describes—and McKay and Monterverde detail—best described by the following phrase: “*I see more because I now also see what you see*” (my emphasis) (p. 43).

The relationships between objects and visitors are strengthened through a heteroglossic and dialogic lens—because viewers embark on a transformational or enlightened journey with the artwork and each other. Furthermore, gallery teachers can learn from the artwork and the visitor as well; they, too, enter the liminal state and emerge from a tour with heightened understanding and new viewpoints. McKay and Monteverde write that dialogically looking at art is a “mutually transforming experience” (p. 44). Educators and visitors can learn from one another and navigate the liminal together. They can thus share their respective phenomenon of thoughts, epiphanies, and experiences in a way that challenges the regular structure of the museum.

Summation of Chapter Two and a Look Ahead to Chapter Three

The major aim for this review of literature was to examine liminal theory in multiple contexts. I strove to build a case for the necessity of this study, as well as to support my research methodology with scholarly literature on the topic of liminality. I did so first by analyzing Victor Turner’s (1977, 1982) initiation of this theory into anthropological and social facets. Though Turner (1977, 1982) studied this theory in relation to tribal ritual, it does relate to the rituals at work within the museum environment. This concept is evidenced in a comprehensive evaluation of Carol Duncan’s (1994, 1995) works, as well as cultural theorists James Clifford (1992) and Homi K. Bhabha (1994).

I went on to examine liminality in real and virtual space through the evaluation of texts by Catherine Smith (n.d., 2003), Elizabeth Grosz (2001), and Victor Burgin (1996) amongst others. Smith (n.d., 2003) and Grosz (2001) were concerned with liminality occurring within architectural structures. Burgin (1996), though, referenced the body as an agent of interaction in real and virtual space. Both of these concepts are applicable to the museum environment. Brent Wilson (2005, 2008), Marjorie Wilson (1977), and David Ebitz (2007), as well as Denise B. Leach (2007), for example, all referred to the navigation of real and virtual spaces within the museum or art classroom.

It can be said, then, that liminality has value in educational praxis. B. Stephen Carpenter (2009) and Alison Cook-Sather (2006) attempted to understand the liminal at work in educational practice by utilizing cyber and web-based programs, such as Second Life or email, where the performance and self-actualization of identity is possible—a transformation, essentially.

The following chapter will expand upon the concept of transformation and the navigation of the liminal through the discussion of the artist who has given this thesis its namesake, the phenomenon of thought: Cildo Meireles.

Chapter Three: Cildo Meireles and Liminal Theory

The previous chapter was a review of literature that detailed the concept of liminality and its pertinence to the museum. In doing so, I have only very briefly described Meireles' 1987 artwork *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)*. A more thorough description of the work is given in this chapter, because I would most definitely be neglecting the reader of this thesis if I failed to verbally illustrate it. The major aim of this chapter is to provide an art historical or curatorial analysis of the aforementioned piece and then to examine it through a liminal lens. First, I write about Cildo Meireles' early years as an artist and discuss his importance to the Brazilian Neoconcrete (or Conceptual) movement. I then connect this artist with liminal theory. Lastly, I discuss *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)* in significant detail.

Cildo Meireles

Cildo Meireles was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1948 (Farmer, 2000; Presnall, 2002). His family moved to Goiânia when he was four, and then to the newly industrialized capital of Brasilia six years later (Farmer, 2000). He grew up as a creative child, often working on short films. In fact, Meireles considered studying film at one point in his life, but instead focused on installation art (Farmer, 2000). He was especially intrigued by *Habitat*, a Brazilian Art magazine that directed attention toward the "exhibitions and ideology" (Presnall, 2002, p. 1) of Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Clark, and Lygia Pape. All three of these artists were grouped under the Western Conceptualist umbrella, but in Brazil they were known as *Neoconcrete* artists.

The differences between these two movements are quite dramatic. However, the most commonly cited distinction between the two is that the Conceptualists focused on a sort of didactic art, while Neoconcretists favored a more seductive approach (Presnall, 2002) that lured viewers into interactive works. It "proposed an analysis of *perception* applied to the level of *experience*" (my emphasis) (Dazord, 2003, p. 138). Experiencing the object was just as important as viewing it. Moreover, experience could have any number of individual properties, such as one's own memories, biases, or interpretive abilities.

The Neoconcretists "proposed a death of the art object and a new form of art that involved viewer participation" (Presnall, 2002, p. 1). Essentially, the artwork did not exist without someone to look at and interpret it. Meireles became fascinated with this concept of the *non object*, first posited by the poet Ferreira Gullar (Dazord, 2003; Farmer, 2000; Presnall, 2002). Called *Toeria do Nao Objecto* or the *Theory of the Non Object*, it is best demonstrated in Hélio Oiticica's (Brett, David, Dercon, Figueiredo, & Pape, 1992) following statement:

> Anti-art, in which the artist understands his/her position not any longer as a creator for contemplation, but as an instigator of creation—'creation' as such: this process completes itself through the dynamic participation of the 'spectator,' now considered as 'participator'…to give him the simple opportunity to participate, so that he finds there something he may want to realize. What the artist proposes is, thus, a 'creative realization'…of man within himself and in his vital creative possibilities. (Brett, David, Dercon, Figueiredo, & Pape, p. 100; Presnall, 2002, p. 22)

The Neoconcrete movement advocated this idea of a non object. Its purpose was to elicit a creative realization, epiphany, or phenomenon of thought from its viewers. These viewers, in fact, were more like participators that were invited to walk through an artwork. The process was inherently active and thus far more enticing than Conceptual art. The movement is dated circa 1959 (Presnall, 2002) as a response to the Concrete movement that occurred after World War II, with its origins in São Paolo (Dazord, 2003).

Meireles was a mere child during this time. He grew up as part of a “younger generation,” which “had two options: guerilla warfare or drugs” (Dazord, quoting Morais, 2003, p. 137). Cécile Dazord (2003) notes that Francisco Bittencourt titled this generation the *Tranca-Ruas* (*barricade*) generation, which literally translates to one “who bars the streets” (p. 143). This class of young citizens was often involved in bloody revolutions (Farmer, 2000). It would be an understatement to refer to this period in history as tumultuous.

The years that followed the beginnings of the Neoconcretist movement were rather turbulent. In March of 1964, for example, a coup’d’etat occurred (Presnall, 2002), and the country’s president was overthrown in favor of military rule (Dazord, 2003). Additionally, on December 13, 1968, the Brazilian military instituted the Fifth Institutional Act, which created a dictatorship and dissolved the constitution; some refer to this period as “the coup d’etat within the coup d’etat” (Dazord, quoting Bennassar & Marin, 2003, p. 137). Censorship was adopted and, as a result, popular musicians and artists were either thrown out of the country (Presnall, 2002) or left voluntarily.

Meireles details an example of government censorship in an interview with John Allen Farmer (2000):

> I started producing more explicitly political work in 1969. A group exhibition was scheduled to open at the Museu de Arte Moderna. The artists who would represent Brazil at the Paris Biennale would be chosen from that show. I had made a formal work for the show, but some of the other works were politically controversial. Three hours before the opening, the police arrived, surrounded the museum, and ordered the show to be dismantled immediately. So it was. (p. 36)

The artist’s *Insercoes em circuitios ideologicos (Insertions into Ideological Circuits)* was his first major successful political artwork. It firmly planted the young artist within the Neoconcrete movement. Created in 1970, the piece contained politically charged messages on familiar objects; namely, Coca-Cola bottles and banknotes. Words, such as "Quem matou Herzog?" or "Who killed Herzog?" were stamped onto these pieces, which were then placed back into regular circulation. The name Herzog refers to the journalist Vladimir Herzog, who was tortured to death in a São Paolo prison for Communist activity (Dazord, 2003).

Meireles commented, "the *Insertions into Ideological Circuits* were created from a need to acquire a system of circulation, an exchange of information that was beyond the reach of any centralized control" (Dazord, 2003, p. 142). The artwork was not something that he considered as art, but instead as anti-art. Meireles challenged the concept of the ready-made and created something that could transcend the museum or gallery. Additionally, this "art" was able to insert itself into an existing system. The works were utilitarian objects that functioned primarily on the viewer acting as both a consumer and an interpreter—the individual acted as a participant in many different ways. This notion is similar to Victor Turner's (1977, 1982) and Carol Duncan's (1994, 1995) theories on the rites of passage and ritual, in which a human progresses from one transitory level of enlightenment to the next. It is between those steps, thought processes, ceremonies, and roles that meaning is realized.

Meireles and His Phenomenon of Thought: Liminality in His Artwork

In an interview with John Allen Farmer (2000), Meireles lauds Orson Welles' 1938 radio broadcast, *The War of the Worlds*, as the greatest work of art of the twentieth century. Meireles remarks, "[it] is an example of an art object that worked perfectly, in the sense that it seamlessly dissolved the border between art and life, fiction and reality" (p. 35). *The War of the Worlds* chronicled events on Earth after an alien invasion in New

Jersey (Farmer, 2000). What happened during this broadcast was truly extraordinary: people actually thought it was real. Many thought the world was indeed ending and that Martians had, in fact, landed on our planet. Welles was able to construct a new sense of reality and space by blurring the borders between fiction and reality. In broadcasting the news story over the radio—as news had been disseminated for years—Welles could essentially trick his listeners into believing his work of art. He played into their fears, hopes, and emotions in a way that most artists had never attempted.

Meireles' pieces operate on this premise of dissolving boundaries and borders between space, time, reality, emotions, fiction, and the human body. His artworks rely on the human as a major component. He forces viewers to reconsider their place in relation to specific feelings, experiences, and emotions, as he proclaims, "one of the functions of an art object should be, in some way, to help redefine or dissolve [these] border[s]" (Farmer, 2000, p. 37).

Emotions usually run quite high in many of Meireles' works. Fear, for example, is a feeling that recurs in several of his pieces (Presnall, 2002). In the work, *Volátil* (*Volatile*) (1980, 1994), the viewer sees a lit candle at the back of a room. He or she then smells natural gas. The museum suddenly becomes a dangerous place to be visiting. Senses are heightened in a way that forces the viewer to confront a specific feeling or emotion. The artist directly channels the flight-or-fight response, an innate reaction that literally makes a human choose his or her own method of survival. A similar type of fear is evident in Meireles' work, *Através* (*Through*), in which visitors are directed through a series of gate-like cattle chutes. The piece is like a labyrinth, as it confuses viewers' spatial awareness. Moreover, participants walk on broken glass, which is quite dangerous, too (Farmer, 2000; Presnall, 2002).

Perhaps one of Meireles' most famous art installations is *Desvio para o Vermelho: Red Shift* (1967-1984), or *Deviation Towards Red* (Maciel, 2003). Visitors are greeted with a triad of different spaces that serve three very disparate functions. The names of the spaces are: *Impregnação* (*Impregnation*); *Entorno* (*Spill/Environment*); and *Desvio* (*Shift*). Everything is covered in red. The visitor enters the first space, *Impregnação*, and notices all the accoutrements that most cozy homes would have, except that it has red everywhere; the furniture, carpets, paintings, poinsettias, and vases are all crimson in tone. "Even the fish in the fish bowl," writes Presnall (2002, p. 13) "are all the same vibrant hue." The walls of the installation, however, are a crisp, modern, museum white.

As the viewer transitions from this comfortable space (albeit, slightly odd, in all of its shades of vermillion), he or she is greeted by *Entorno*. The space is considerably darker. A tiny bottle lay on the black floor. Meanwhile, a saturated red liquid has seeped out everywhere, leaving behind a suspiciously large, wave-patterned puddle—but the size of this bloody lake is disproportionate to the small glass container at the other end of the room. The visitor is disarmed in a way that makes him or her recognize that something is not quite right or comfortable. His or her senses are elevated. Upon entering the last of the rooms, the *Shift*, the viewer hears liquid flowing. He or she is forced to turn a dark corner, where an angled, porcelain white sink comes into clear view. The sink, though, has red liquid spewing and spilling all over its edges. Bloodied fingerprints and smudges are present (Presnall, 2002).

The area gradually transitions from someone's home into a crime scene. Meireles, it seems, created this work in response to a traumatic event in his life; when he was a child, his father took him to see a murdered family friend. The crime scene included a bloodied message written on the wall (Presnall, 2002). In participating in this installation, the visitor is asked to walk through one of Meireles' own dark memories.

I would argue with all of these installations that Meireles essentially creates a dramatically cautious situation that compels the viewer to forget about the initial type of caution with which he or she may approach a work of art, or a museum in general. In all of these cases, the liminal is clearly an uncomfortable transition. As Gaynor Kavanagh (2000) points out in *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum*, these memories, transitions, or experiences can be both positive and negative. The author notes, "just like dreams," remembering "can provide comfort or disturbance, and be a source of refreshment or dismay" (p. 171). Meireles often capitalizes on these human emotions (Presnall, 2002). He privileges the uncomfortable and creates a zone of struggle—in this instance, the liminal is not an easy transition. Coupled with this painful or eerie sense, though, is the idea that the viewer is almost unquestionably thinking about his or her own feelings in relation to that work of art.

Farmer (2000) describes Meireles' method of "[creating] situations, journeys that sometimes incite fear, in which visitors have the opportunity to become conscious of their bodies in space—not only in physical space, but in social space, too" (p. 41). Viewers of his work are aware of themselves in new ways. This is, undoubtedly, a brilliant victory for the artist, as well as a supreme opportunity for the educator to extrapolate a true phenomenon of thought.

Not all of Meireles' works, however, operate on fear. While the artist has made a considerable number of artworks that utilize this terrifying human emotion, he has also created installations that are transformative and pleasant experiences. In one of his first installations, *Virtual Spaces: Corners* (1967-1968), Meireles builds several absent corners of perimeters within a space. It defies Euclidean space (Farmer, 2000), which Burgin (1996) notes as metric, finite, and exists within the second and third dimension. As Katia Maciel (2003) writes, the piece "explore[s] how to interrelate three planes and how to place a figure in space" (p. 157). The areas between the body, these planes, and space are highlighted in a way that challenges normative structures.

Meireles expands upon this concept in *Eureka/Blindhotland* (1970-1975), which was inspired by Borges' 1941 work *Tlon, Uqbar, Orbius Tertius*, where he describes a "brave new world created by scientists, philosophers, artists—a world that does not exist as a system of objects in space, but as a series of actions in time" (Farmer, 2000, p. 43). The piece includes a series of two hundred dark-colored round spheres that visitors are encouraged to play with and move around the space. The balls are uniform in shape and size and are placed on a net. However, they vary in weight from 500 to 1,500 grams (Maciel, 2003). The laws of physics are ignored in a way that makes the viewer conscious of his or her body while picking up and putting down these different spheres. It is a sensory game that plays with space and dimensions, as if the visitor is on a different planet and experiencing disparate gravitational forces with every ball that is handled.

All these art installations have described Meireles' phenomenon of thought in varying ways. Some of the pieces specifically channel human fear in a manner that makes visitors uncomfortable of their surroundings, as well as their place within those surroundings. Several of Meireles' works, though, channel a physical awareness of the body's place in space and time, as the viewer is seemingly able to transcend dimensions. And as mentioned during this study's early biographical examination of Cildo Meireles, some of these pieces have serious political implications. One of Meireles' most compelling pieces, however, is the one that this study has chosen to examine with the most scrutiny: *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)*. The piece, created in 1987, seems to combine all these aspects seamlessly into one sacrosanct gallery of work.

Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)

Cildo Meireles' artwork relies on viewers to share memories and participate in ways that are unconventional to the museum space. As Farmer (2000) notes, Meireles' pieces are not so much objects, "but *situations* that require the participation of the audience in order to be complete" (my emphasis) (p. 37). This is common for Neoconcrete artists; they believe the artwork exists during the moment of interaction. His works are incredibly situational. They give viewers the chance to enter or observe a new space.

In some ways, this is an option that museums often discourage. However, in deciphering the work, I argue that one may realize that this "option" is a carefully disguised, coerced movement that forces viewers to access a series of complex metaphors. I believe, then, that it is important to begin this section by describing *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)* as physically as possible. Then I will move into a more art historical analysis of some of the ideas and theories at work.

In *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)*, the visitor is greeted by several curious objects, all working with one another in the art installation: 600,000 pennies;

2,000 cattle bones; 800 communion wafers; and several black mesh curtains that skirt the entire perimeter of the piece (see Figure 1). Additionally, there are 80 cement paving blocks on the floor around the pennies, within the zone designated by the black curtain (Ramirez & Adams, 1992).

It is important to note that this is the only work of art in the entire gallery space; there are two entrances on either side of the piece, allowing museum visitors to flow from one very brightly lit, white gallery to the next. In stark contrast, this particular gallery is a deep shade of gray charcoal and lies in transition from the two contemporary galleries on either side. Lighting is very minimal. There are two windows in the corner of the room; however, both have been covered with a blackout shade. Thus, the only lighting in the room peaks through the cattle bones, which are hanging in mid air. The lights cast their subtle, golden shadow on the field of copper pennies below. Connecting these two levels—the cattle bones and the pennies—is a long, spindly line of communion wafers, centrally located, almost evoking physically, a spine; and metaphorically, an axis mundi between two different worlds: the corporeal and the material.

If one were to look up in the gallery space, he or she would be greeted by a series of wires and cables that suspend the cattle bones and lights over the piece. According to Ursula Davila-Villa (personal communication, November 24, 2009), curator of Latin American Art at the Blanton Museum of Art, the ceiling was specially designed and reinforced to carry the immense weight of the lights and cattle bones. It is a permanent installation and the room was created specifically for this work when the museum was built in late 2005 and formally opened in 2006.

Sue Ellen Jeffers, the Registrar at the Blanton Museum of Art (personal communication, February 5, 2010), points out that prior to its exhibition by The University of Texas in 1992 (at the Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery—the precursor to the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art) and subsequent acquisition in 1998 (hence its formal accession number is 1998.76), the piece moved around quite a bit. For example, it may have been shown in Valencia, Spain in 1995 (Jeffers, personal communication, February 5, 2010), in addition to its exhibition in the United States and England. And with each move, Meireles left various curators and preparators with specific instructions for the piece. One example of these stipulations is that the currency on the floor must match the lowest denomination of currency in the country of exhibition. All of the coins must also be from the year of display or accession. In this case, The United States of America's smallest form of currency is the penny. The penny is copper-colored. When lights shine down onto this type of money, a warm, golden glow is emanated. Additionally, all the original pennies in this piece are dated 2005 (Sue Ellen Jeffers, personal communication, February 5, 2010).

Contrastingly, when the work was installed in Great Britain in Birmingham, Manchester, and London in 1991 (Ramirez & Adams, 1992), the lowest denomination was a lustrous silvery color. The lighting effect was entirely different. The feeling, says Davila-Villa (personal communication, November 24, 2009) was considerably cooler and far more austere than its American counterpart. In a way, the overall tone of the piece changed from one that may have channeled an icy sense or uncomfortable fear to one that embraced viewers in a heavenly gold. Furthermore, the gold connotes an instant association with wealth which, as will be noted later, is a central idea in one of the meanings of this artwork.

The visitor is invited to walk through black mesh fabric into the piece, shattering the notion that artwork must not be touched. The artist's work practically envelopes its viewers. E.T. Presnall's (2002) Master's Thesis at The University of Texas at Austin, *The Installations of Cildo Meireles: Redefining Penetrable Space*, calls this an example of Meireles' *penetrables*, which the author defines as, "a new utilization of artistic space that [intends] to move beyond the static art object" (p. 1). Many of Meireles' installations are penetrable not only in physicality, but also emotionally.

Presnall (2002) remarks that the artist's installations utilize color and familiar household objects to directly access personal memory and emotions. In *Desvio para o Vermelho: Red Shift*, for example, visitors noticed flowers, paintings, couches, and chairs—instantly recognizing everyday objects. In *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals),* the viewer is greeted by soft lighting, pennies, a line of communion wafers, and bones, igniting any number of personal associations. Presnall (2002) also notes the importance of a meshed material that is present in many of Meireles' works, including the one in this study, *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals).* I argue that this fabric serves as a permeable—and liminal—membrane amidst spaces and objects.

I have described the piece, *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals),* as physically as possible. Now it is my intent to write about this piece from an art historical perspective—that is, defining its metaphors and symbols in a way that the reader can understand several of Miereles' major points—and perhaps construct some new meanings for him or herself. I will begin by detailing again, as specifically as possible, the components of this piece, in order to reinform the reader, as well as support my art historical analysis.

As mentioned previously, the work contains four very significant objects: pennies, communion wafers, cattle bones, and a black mesh curtain. Additionally, the piece also includes light as a way to illuminate all of these objects. There are 600,000 coins, 800 communion wafers, and 2,000 bleached cattle bones present in the installation (Ramirez & Adams, 1992). The pennies lay on the bottom tier in a pool; the communion wafers are positioned as a long, central spine that serves to connect the bottom and top tiers; and the cattle bones are suspended at the head of this piece, with bits of light poking through and casting down onto the pool below. There are 80 paver stones, laid out in a square, that contain the coins in a pool-like manner (Ramirez & Adams, 1992). There is, finally, a black mesh curtain on all four sides of this piece that hangs—with the cattle bones—from a series of cables and wires at the summit.

The pennies are all dated 2005 (Sue Ellen Jeffers, personal communication, February 5, 2010). They are a coppery gold in tone. Their coloring instantly connotes ideas of wealth and luxury. However, as previously noted, the penny is the lowest denomination of currency available in the United States. As a result of this pairing, Meireles creates an opposition between concepts of wealth and poverty. He also focuses on the idea of mining a precious object. Copper, for example, is an important earthly mineral in Latin American culture (Ursula Davila-Villa, personal communication, November 24, 2009). It is expensive and takes considerable (slave) labor to obtain.

The communion wafers automatically reference religion. As a Catholic, I was able to recognize that these wafers—or the Holy Eucharist—symbolize the body of

Christ. Traditional Catholic Sunday mass asks its participants to engage in a sacrament called Communion, where the priest will consecrate bread and wine and then transform it into the body and blood of Christ. Both of these rituals are performed for two purposes, the first of which is to ingest something that is godly after repenting for one's sins; the second, and most important aspect of this custom, is to be reminded of Christ's sacrifice of his blood and his body for the survival and good of humanity. In participating in this religious ritual, the Catholic is informed of God's undying love for everyone and is asked to recreate that love by living in the image of Christ.

The top tier of this piece is full of cattle bones. The bones are considerably larger than human bones and they hang in sequenced rows, as if part of some odd science experiment. They hang, though, from a series of long cables that are implanted into the ceiling. One cannot help wondering if this structure is capable of handling the tons of cattle bones and lighting equipment beneath. As a viewer, I noted that I felt privileged to be inside of the work, yet also scared.

The bones have been bleached and are a stark, skeletal white. They reference the corporeal. In addition, they also symbolize a way of life in South America that has existed for centuries (personal communication from docents, November 19, 2009 and January 20, 2010). They channel into the ideas of agriculture, land cultivation, and hard labor amongst Latin American farmers and citizens.

The black mesh curtain, finally, is sheer. Its color absorbs and contains light in specific areas of the piece. Were the curtain white, for example, the glow would burst through the gossamer fabric in a way that would make the gray gallery considerably brighter. I would argue that in utilizing black mesh fabric, Meireles has essentially created a shroud for the communion wafers, pennies, and cattle bones that instantly evokes the idea of a quiet, sacred religious space of ritual. The gallery is dark in a way that mimics the quietness of a church. Upon entering this space, visitors are confronted with a situation to negotiate (Farmer, 2000). It is not so much a choice, but rather a series of feelings to resolve. Viewers are often disarmed and unsure whether or not to access the piece. They do so in the same manner that someone would enter a religious space—very slow, careful, deliberate navigation of the area, coupled with the ritual-like behavior of speaking softly in God’s house. These ideas are evidenced by the word “cathedral” in the piece’s title.

The title, *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals),* alludes to several ideas occurring in the work. The words *missão* and *missões* refer to a Brazilian mission (Ramirez, 1992). There were seven Jesuit missions located in Latin America between the years of 1610 and 1767 and they were collectively known as “os sete povos” (Ramirez, 1992). These missions were created during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as an extension of the Catholic church, as well as a stronghold of the colonial empire in Spain and Portugal. The missions served an extremely important role. They aimed to speak the word of God, collect food and minerals from the land, and export those materials back to the empire across the Atlantic Ocean. They also, in theory, strived to keep the citizens of this community employed and connected in a way that would allow for the empire to prosper as a whole (personal communication from docents, November 19, 2009 and January 20, 2010).

Meireles’ work essentially argues that the Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires mishandled the missions. The result of this mistreatment is that the citizens of these communities were left quite poor, despite their diligent, hard work and sacrifice. In addition, the constant harvesting of supplies often left the land barren and stripped of resources for anyone living in Latin America during this time. The powers grew richer, while the poor faded deeper and deeper in poverty (personal communication from docents, November 19, 2009 and January 20, 2010).

The description of *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)* on the Blanton Museum of Art's web site is considerably similar to the museum wall label that accompanies the object. It reads:

> Cildo Meireles has gained an international reputation for his effective combination of Conceptual art with explicit social and political critiques. In *Missão/Missões* he makes reference to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jesuit missions in southern Brazil, Paraguay, and northern Argentina. The missions were established as communities to convert the indigenous Tupi-Guaraní people to Catholicism, and many of the Jesuit and Franciscan churches remain among the jewels of Latin American Baroque architecture. Meireles's [sic] evocative contemporary "cathedral" exposes the hidden agenda behind these missions, highlighting in particular the relationship between wealth (600,000 coins on the ground), agricultural exploitation (2,000 suspended cattle bones), and religion (a column of communion wafers connecting the "land" and the "heavens"). The installation draws attention to the fact that the conquest of the Americas was as much about economics as it was about religion or saving souls. (*Exhibitions and Collections: Cildo Meireles*, n.d.)

Meireles communicates these ideas by creating a sacred space that evokes the concepts of ritual, wealth, and labor through the use of communion wafers, pennies, and cattle bones. However, Meireles has created this piece in the inverse of how a cathedral is normally built. These churches served as the epicenter of a community. Cathedrals usually had catacombs and patrons buried underneath, the religious ceremonies occurred centrally, and the expensive gold and gilded metals were reserved for the ceilings in ornate displays of Christian imagery.

Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals), though, turns this idea on its head, both literally and metaphorically (personal communication from docents, November 19, 2009 and January 20, 2010). It physically inverts the church by placing the wealth on the floor and the bones above. It also metaphorically challenges the church's treatment of native cultures, such as the Tupi-Gurani (Ramirez, 1992), by suggesting that the colonial empire favored trampling over these societies. In the work, the church has paved over them with cement blocks and money.

Symbolically, it is my opinion that there is something occurring within the gallery that is much deeper than the art historical analysis of this piece. I have discussed the black mesh curtain and glow of pennies, as well as the presence of communion wafers and cattle bones, as metaphoric cues for religion within this work. However, of particular interest to this study is the disguised "choice" that Meireles offers his viewers, simply put: come in, or stay out.

After observing several tours passing through this artwork, I noticed that viewers are instantly quieted upon entering this dimly-lit gallery. They must walk toward the center of the room to inspect the piece more closely. They are then offered a choice—an option that I believe plays into the artist's fascination with human emotion and interaction. If one decides to walk outside of the piece and skirt the perimeter of the black mesh, there is, in a way, a sense of exclusion from the glittery little world that exists inside. There is an inherent desire to remove the black mesh curtain and see the piece more clearly—to enter and be a part of the artwork. However, this defies conventional museum notions, which asks visitors to ignore the urge to touch. Meireles, however, lures his visitors in seductively; they must place a hand on the black curtain and pull it aside to enter and then, they must walk on the concrete stones to fully view the piece outside of its permeable mesh membrane.

If one decides to enter this realm, he or she is greeted eerily by a ton—literally—of precariously suspended cattle bones that may collapse at any moment. It is my understanding that the bones reference skeletons—namely, death. It makes the visitor uncomfortable. In my data collection and field notes, I also wrote a series of questions that I believe the viewer must ask. He or she has to theorize what, exactly, is suspended in the middle of the work. Is it an actual skeletal spine? Or, why are there religious objects in a public institution? Furthermore, visitors are challenged by the glow of the most ubiquitous object in this work: the pennies. Should they be touched? Is the visitor allowed to enter the space and step on the paving blocks, but not on the precious money? Additionally, viewers bring their own experiences, interpretations, and associations to the table, as meaning is personally realized in many different ways. For example, when I viewed all the light and dark shadows on the pennies, I was instantly reminded of a topographical map—could this reference the importance of copper and land in the piece? Perhaps. What is more important, though, is that I was able to construct meaning out of this work through my own insights.

Additionally, I would also be so bold as to theorize that Meireles plays with the concepts of inclusion, exclusion, and compulsion in this work. The video footage from my research shows quite clearly that viewers want to step inside and be drawn to the light, like moths to a flame. However, it is against most museum policies to touch a work of art. There is also the art historical analysis that references the inclusion and exclusion of laborers within the colonial empire. Moreover, though, Meireles draws upon the visitor's compulsion to enter and understand the artwork; he somehow manages to both invite and force the viewer inside at the same time. In my opinion, this is what makes the penetrable piece very successful.

Meireles' penetrable artworks rely on an open relationship between the artist's created spatial environment and the spectator's participation in the process of that creation. I theorize that in *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)*, the whole room becomes the object—specifically when the visitor enters it. The room is charged with an eerie energy or aura and lays waiting for a participant. "A constant in Cildo Meireles' work," writes Cécile Dazord (2003) in a Musées de Strasbourg exhibition catalogue, "is his refusal of the premise of continuous and homogenous space, which he replaces with a representation of a fragmented and multiple reality that is both unstable and changing" (pp. 139-140). *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)* constantly allows for uncomfortable and seductive exchanges between itself as an object and those who view it, who can fluidly move in and out of it. Liminal theory and its relation to ritual, art, and personal meaning making is thus evident through Meireles' work.

Summation of Chapter Three and a Look Ahead to Chapter Four

I have spent this section of my thesis discussing Cildo Meireles. I began by biographically detailing the artist's life and placement within the Neoconcrete movement in Brazil. The Neoconcretists rely on human interaction with, and within, the art object. Meireles, for example, crafts art installations that are *penetrable*, in which the visitor can enter the artwork as an agent of interaction. The major piece within this study, *Missão/Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)*, is no exception to this idea. Additionally, this chapter examined Meireles' phenomenon of thought and artistic theory at work within his other art installations. Immediately following, I analyzed *Missão/Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)*, both physically and art historically. There are many meanings within the art installation and in analyzing it, I aimed to give the reader sufficient information on the object. Moreover, in personally decoding the piece, I was more prepared to watch others do the same during a series of museum tours.

These three chapters have worked to build a case for the necessity of using liminal theory as a lens with which to understand how personal meaning making may occur within the museum. The following chapter will delve into the actual research and data components of this thesis by first reviewing my methodology and then analyzing each docent-led tour through a methodology of content analysis. The subsequent chapter will continue to aid me in answering my central research questions and bringing an empirical conclusion to this study.

Chapter Four: Liminality and the Tour Experience in the Museum

In the three preceding chapters, I have introduced the reader to this study, reviewed pertinent literature regarding various aspects of liminal theory, and theorized Cildo Meireles' importance to this theory within the museum setting. The following chapter serves to further illuminate the relationships between gallery teachers, visitors, and objects through a liminal lens. It will begin with a review of the study's research methodology and procedures for collecting and evaluating data. It will also disclose said data collected from two of the three planned docent-led tours, dated November 19, 2009 and January 20, 2010.

Research Methodology

As stated previously, this thesis was initially designed as a cross-case study of three docent-led tours at the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art in Austin, Texas. Robert E. Stake (1988) defines a *case study* as the study of one thing, person, classroom, curriculum, or case of connected groups, populations, or general activities. The methodology for qualitative case studies relies on the researcher's observations. These observations are both descriptive and interpretive (Stake, 1988). A *cross-case study* employs observations made from several cases (Stake, 1995). This type of case study casts a large net across multiple cases to look for similarities and differences between these examples (Stake, 1995). This study initially observed three cases of a docent-led museum tour, hence making it a cross-case study.

One of these cases was later omitted from my research because it did not meet the requirements of my purposive sample. A purposive sample, as outlined by Patton (1990), is a group or sample chosen and utilized for specific characteristics. In my study, the docents—also known in this study as museum educators or gallery teachers—served as a purposive sample, because I sought out docents who favored a conversational approach to the museum tour, versus a lecture-based method. In one of the tours I observed, the docent was a curator. This gallery teacher did not engage the tour group in conversation and as a result, I eliminated this tour from my study. Further details about this omission can be found in this chapter's next section, *Procedures for Collecting and Evaluating Data*.

This cross-case study utilized a *triangulated research methodology*. According to Patton (1990), triangulation is a combination of multiple research techniques that support and validate qualitative research, yet a singular truth is not established. The aim is to collect data in a variety of ways, each assisting one another to reinforce results and conclusions. The investigator, however, does not qualitatively alter or interpret findings to suit his or her needs. Rather, the researcher is a characteristically skilled observer (Patton, 1990) and is able to empirically extrapolate conclusions from his or her research. In this study, I planned to examine visitors' responses to the object by journaling and taking notes during the tours. I also utilized audio and video equipment to capture the live exchange between the object and the visitors; I did so by enlisting the assistance of a peer to handle this equipment, while I took notes. I then interviewed the docents of the tours, thus making my cross-case study research methodology triangulated (Patton, 1990). I also reviewed pertinent literature to assist in answering my central research questions.

This study's method of data analysis was *content analysis*. This process identifies and analyzes data from various transcripts or texts, then divides results and responses into categories for analysis and interpretation. Krippendorff (2004) chronicles the use of content analysis as a component of research that has roots in the field of mass communication. It has since grown to include historical or qualitative research approaches. Most significant in content analysis as a method of data analysis is its use of multiple documents and forms of data to assert validity. In this study, I first omitted findings from one of the tours I observed (I have discussed this previously and I elaborate on this matter in the following section of this chapter), then utilized data from two audio and video recorded museum tours, two interviews with docents, field notes, and scholarly literature to categorize my results into three main foci: (a) separation; (b) liminal; and (c) aggregation. There were also four subcategories: (a) observation; (b) connection; (c) realization; and (d) transformation. I expand upon these categories throughout this chapter, specifically in the sections *Content Analysis: Separation*, *Content Analysis: The Liminal*, and *Content Analysis: Aggregation*.

Procedures for Collecting and Evaluating Data

This cross-case study is qualitative in its approach. My research techniques, as described in the previous section of this chapter, included the use of content analysis, audio and video recordings (and observations logged from those recordings), field notes, and interviews, in addition to the review of pertinent scholarly and philosophical literature about liminal theory and museum education. Its approach is triangulated to reinforce conclusions made from its data.

I began by writing a proposal for this study, which I then submitted to The University of Texas at Austin’s Institutional Review Board, or IRB. My proposal included my intent to receive informed consent from this study’s adult participants; all of my participants, including the docents, were given consent forms to sign, date, and return to me prior to engaging in the museum tour (see Appendix A: Sample Consent Forms). I also received consent from the three docents to interview each of them at the conclusion of the tour. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary. Visitors who did not wish to participate in my study were given the option to instead embark on a museum tour with a different docent—and those tours were not video or audio recorded, or evaluated as part of this study.

Since all my participants in this study were over the age of eighteen, I did not need to obtain any parental consent. However, all the participants were notified that I would be audio and video recording each tour in the Meireles gallery prior to signing individual consent forms. Additionally, participants were informed about privacy and confidentiality; no names or identifying factors—other than occasional references to gender—were utilized in my data analysis. Furthermore, I was the only person to view and listen to any audio or video recordings. At the conclusion of this study, these recordings were destroyed to again maintain privacy and confidentiality.

As part of my proposal to the IRB, I provided my reasons for selecting the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art as my research site. Motives for this selection are twofold: it not only contains the principle artwork in this study, Cildo Meireles' *Missão/Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)* as a permanent installation, but it is also an entity of the University of Texas at Austin. As a graduate student at this institution, I was able to easily work side-by-side with Blanton staff to identify three adult tours and three docents that would align with my criteria and purposive sample. I was also able to secure an image of Meireles' artwork for educational use in this study by contacting further Blanton staff (see Figure 1). Moreover, I received permission from the Director of Education at the

Blanton Museum of Art (see Appendix B: Site Approval Letter from the Blanton Museum of Art) to conduct my study in the Meireles gallery—specifically, I was granted approval to utilize audio and video equipment in this gallery.

I then enlisted the assistance of a peer to audio and video record three different adult tours in the Blanton Museum of Art in November 2009 and January 2010. I must make note that all of my research and observations occurred in only one gallery of the museum. This is one of the major limitations of this study: I only observed these tours while they were stationed in the gallery that housed Cildo Meireles' *Missão/Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)*.

The first tour occurred on November 19, 2009. The group spent sixteen minutes and twenty one seconds in the Meireles piece, *Missão/Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)*. Fifteen adult visitors and one female docent made up the tour group. The second tour, which occurred November 24, 2009, was soon omitted from my research data. In reviewing the audio and video recordings, as well as looking at my field notes and observations, I recognized that this tour did not meet the requirements which were laid out in the first chapter's limitations and research methodology sections. Namely, the docent who conducted this tour was a curator. This curator was lecture-based in the Meireles gallery and the dialogue was one-sided. The tour, therefore, did not align with the requirements of my initial purposive sample: three docents, who favored dialogue over lecture. I made a decision to remove this tour from my content analysis and instead shift the focus of my study to two tours, dated November 19, 2009 and January 20, 2010.

This last tour stayed in the art installation for approximately nine minutes and fifteen seconds, which is considerably less time than the first tour group I observed.

However, the content of this tour was just as valuable to this research as the first tour. This grouping consisted of fourteen senior citizens and one docent. For the remainder of this study, I will refer to this tour as the second tour, despite the fact that it chronologically occurred third in my observation of tours at the Blanton Museum of Art. While observing these two tours, I wrote field notes. At their conclusion, I also sat down with each of the docents and conducted a semi-structured interview. I audio recorded each of these sessions, without the aid of my peer.

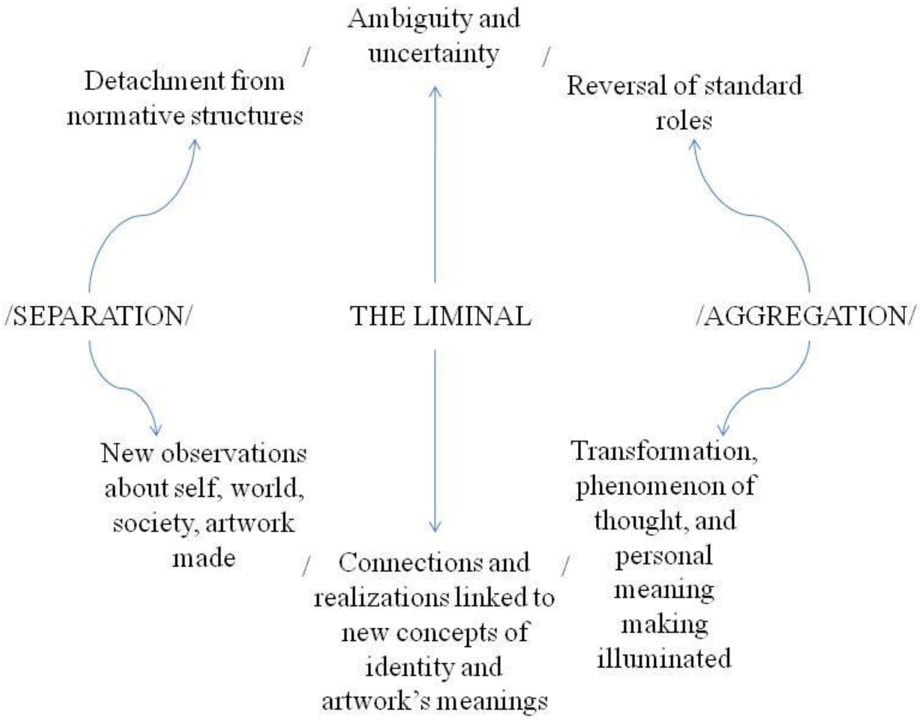
I watched the video recordings from each of the tours and made comments, which I compared and analyzed with my observational field notes from each tour. I then transcribed the narrative from both tours and the two closing interviews with the docents from my audio and video footage. These transcriptions noted docent and multiple visitor comments by number to further maintain privacy and confidentiality. I then highlighted and coded these texts by looking at the transitions in the tour from one thought, opinion, or statement to the next. I did not select one or two words to follow throughout the duration of the tour in my content analysis. Rather, I holistically viewed the tour's conversations and conclusions about the artwork into a series of categories. Initially, these categories reflected Denise B. Leach's (2007) and Charles Garoian's (2001) concepts on dynamic museum place and the museum as performance. The original categories for my content analysis were: (a) *origin*; (b) *creation and autobiography*; (c) *display*; (d) *experiencer-object*; and (e) *dialogue and performance*.

For multiple reasons, these areas simply did not work within the context of this research. My central research questions aimed to understand and emphasize the interactions between educators, viewers, and artifacts. Leach's (2007) original categories (origin, creation, display, and experiencer-object), however, are inherently object-based. Furthermore, I found that Leach's categories were simply too rigid when placed within the context of liminality. The liminal is a gray zone; an in-between site; a transition between van Gennep's (Belmont, 1974; Deflem, 1991) stages of separation and aggregation in his rites de passage. It is the part of the museum that, as Leach (2007) herself writes, "begs to be identified" (p. 198). Yet by pinning down four mostly object-based zones, the areas in between are essentially ignored. Gone is the postmodern blurring, and in its place is instead a modernist mapping diagram of museum as a place—not as a series of interactions.

Additionally, I must make note that Garoian's (2001) contributions to my original content analysis groups—autobiography, dialogue, and performance—are more focused on interactions between the visitor and the object. However, in reexamining my initial categories, I found it more appropriate to start over in a manner that was less about punctuating one type of interaction, and more about recognizing various layered states of transition and transactions throughout the duration of the tour. The latter idea echoes David Ebitz (2007), who utilized a participle to drive at the idea of fluid, reciprocal process. For some time, I, too, considered employing a participle to drive at the idea of an active process occurring between educators, viewers, and objects. Yet in identifying van Gennep's (Belmont, 1974; Deflem, 1991) three rites of passage, I reassessed my content analysis to include three categories: *separation, liminal,* and *aggregation*.

The tours, field notes, observational notes from video footage, and interviews were divided amongst three primary categories (separation, liminal, and aggregation) and four subcategories (observation, connection, realization, and transformation) that reference internal questions I asked during my content analysis. In reviewing the data, I realized that in the separation category, for example, the docents and visitors seemed to rely heavily on simple observations about the artwork. The liminal phase of the tours appeared to reveal the docents and visitors collaboratively working together to negotiate broader connections and realizations about the art object, society, and themselves, for example. The aggregation stage seemed to scaffold all these characteristics into a transformative process, where new knowledge and meanings were constructed about the artwork.

I should disclose that I doubt these are the only steps of a ritual process in the museum environment. These stages are instead meant to serve as tiers for recognizing liminal theory's place in museum education. I believe that these categories—separation, liminal, and aggregation—overlap and scaffold to create new forms of museum dialogue and educational processes (see Figure 2). In the following sections, I detail these categories further and reveal supporting data as possible examples of these stages from both museum tours I observed.



Ambiguity and uncertainty
/
/
Detachment from normative structures
Reversal of standard roles
/SEPARATION/
THE LIMINAL
/AGGREGATION/
New observations about self, world, society, artwork made
/
Connections and realizations linked to new concepts of identity and artwork's meanings
/
Transformation, phenomenon of thought, and personal meaning making illuminated

Figure 2. Negotiation of personal meaning making through lens of liminal theory and rites de passage. This figure was created to assist the reader of this thesis in understanding liminal theory. It is modeled after Ebitz's (2007) transacting theory. It represents collaborative effort from the docent, visitor, and object. It stresses fluidity, reciprocity, and tiers of learning scaffolded betwixt and between one another in the context of this research; slashes between words represent these transactions. This figure does not attempt to map, pinpoint, or localize the liminal in general.

Content Analysis: Separation

As Deflem (1991) writes, Turner’s fascination with liminality focused on how “ritual not only takes place within a social process, but is itself processual” (p. 17). Liminal theory stresses the idea of a *process* of interaction, rather than domains (Leach, 2007). Deflem (1991) cites Turner’s use of three categories, separation, liminal, and aggregation, from Arnold van Gennep’s (Belmont, 1974) rites de passage. As noted in this study’s second chapter, Deflem (1991, citing Turner, 1968) defines these three phases as the following:

> Separation or the pre-liminal…[is] when a person or group becomes detached from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or from an earlier set of social conditions; [the] margin or the liminal [is] when the state of the ritual subject is ambiguous; [the ritual subject] is no longer in the old state and has not yet reached the new one; and…aggregation or the post-liminal [is] when the ritual subject enters a new stable state with its own rights and obligations. (p. 6)

The separation stage occurs when the individual, or set of individuals, begins to create distance from normal social cues (see Figure 2). In the context of the museum, I defined this separation stage in my content analysis as how the visitor, educator, or object begins to detach oneself from traditional museum roles. In the tours that I observed, the docents appeared to reference this detachment by allowing the visitors to step beyond the black mesh curtain and into the art installation. They noted the differences between the artwork and other pieces in the museum by comparing the visitors’ newfound ability to enter into the piece and touch it.

Guiding questions that I considered while conducting this content analysis in the separation stage included: how has the visitor or gallery teacher initiated a detachment from normative social cues or museum rules? Is this detachment evidenced in the types of *observations* is the visitor or educator making? What types of observations are being made? How is this artwork different from what the visitor has seen before? Or, what does the artwork initially remind the visitor or educator of? These are, admittedly, very similar to the “what is it?” and “how is it made?” forms of inquiry. However, these questions place more emphasis on the interactions between the gallery teacher, visitor, and object. I looked for examples of this stage—as well as the liminal and aggregation phases—in transcribed text from the video recordings, as well as in my field notes and observations about the tours. I triangulated this data with support from my interviews with the docents.

The first tour, dated November 19, 2009, provides evidence of what I observed as the separation stage. Visitors were first invited by the docent to step beyond the black mesh fabric and walk on the concrete pavement stones. The docent made sure to note that, “you can walk around this piece as well. There aren’t many pieces of the museum that we can touch. In fact, museums always say you can’t touch anything.” In reviewing this tour, I began the separation stage at this point, as the docent made it quite clear that normal museum cues are inherently ignored in this art installation. Visitors were able to separate this space from others in the museum environment, possibly evidenced by the following dialogue:

> DOCENT ONE: …so part of this Neoconcretist group, they wanted you to participate. So what, how have we participated already in this piece of artwork?
> VISITOR ONE: We’re inside of it.
> DOCENT ONE: We’re inside of it; we came into it. And how does he invite us in?
> VISITOR TWO: Shiny pennies.
> DOCENT ONE: Shiny pennies. What else does he do?
> VISITOR THREE: There’s kind of like a walkway here.
> DOCENT ONE: There’s a walkway; he gives us an access to it, right? He also invites us in because he has this netting surrounding us, right? So everything is happening inside the piece and he wants us to come inside the piece.

I noted that this portion of the tour contains very simple, observational statements from the visitors. The video footage shows the visitors looking around the installation, up at the bones and lighting, as well as down at the concrete and the pennies. My field notes also referenced the viewers' interest in looking around the installation; I wrote down that visitors appeared to be "revering" the artwork. My notes also recognized the docent's patience in guiding the visitors with her questions.

The docent talked quite a bit in the beginning of the tour and asked fairly basic observational questions as prompts. One visitor then made a point that indicated he or she was separating from traditional museum roles; this piece was different from other pieces in the museum because one is allowed to walk inside of it. In fact, by claiming, "we're inside of it," the visitor recognized an added, active, and living component to the artwork. Other observations that referenced the separation stage included comments about the pennies and the walkway. Visitors understood that there was a separation from traditional museum cues—such as not touching the artwork—and recognized instead that the artist favored a dynamic experience that transcends the visual.

The second tour, which occurred on January 20, 2010, also has evidence of what appears to be separation. Upon entering the space, the docent remarked, "We've seen examples of a sculpture. We've seen examples of painting. This is something called installation art…Give me a first impression when you come in here…What's the first thing you think of?" In reviewing the transcribed text and video, I placed the *separation* stage directly after this docent's opening statement. One may note the similarities between this educator's opening question and the central inquiries I asked during the separation stage of my content analysis (for instance, I asked, "What does the artwork initially remind the visitor of?”). The visitors’ responses were observational and begin with short statements and queries:

> VISITOR ONE: Wonder how many pennies are there?
> DOCENT TWO: Wonder how many pennies are there?
> VISITOR TWO: Why are all the bones hanging from the top?
> DOCENT TWO: Why do we have bones hanging from the ceiling?
> VISITOR THREE: Bones and pennies.
> DOCENT TWO: Bones and pennies, (VISITOR FOUR: Shiny), and as you might imagine, this is a really popular piece with children, schoolchildren.
> VISITOR FIVE: Are they allowed to touch?
> DOCENT TWO: They are. Yes. This is the only thing in the museum that you can touch.
> VISITOR FIVE: Well that’s gonna tarnish the pennies.

Similar to the first tour on November 19, 2009, these visitors also recognized the conscious decisions that artists make when creating an artwork—namely, that in exposing the piece publicly, the work becomes organic and inherently vulnerable. There are vestiges of the *liminal* stage beginning to overlap in this separation stage. The segue from one rite of passage to another is foreboding in the following dialogue:

> VISITOR FIVE: To me it was intriguing, because it was obvious as we approached, and saw people in here*, we were going to enter in to a piece of art* (my emphasis).
> DOCENT TWO: Right. How often do you get to do that?
> VISITOR FIVE: Yeah.
> DOCENT TWO: What about this element (pointing to black curtain)?
> VISITOR SIX: It frames it.
> DOCENT TWO: Frames it. Yes.
> VISITOR TWO: Makes it a private space.
> DOCENT TWO: Okay. What kind of private thoughts are you having in this private space?
> VISITOR TWO: I’m thinking about a hip replacement!
> (Laughter from entire group).
> DOCENT TWO: I hear you, I hear you.

This exchange suggests that the tour group was aware of their own bodies as active agents that entered the artwork. The hip replacement comment, for example, appeared to relate the piece to the corporeal. My observations and field notes included the words “lighthearted dialogue.” And though the tone is indeed lighthearted, the tour group also seemed to understand that this space is private, dramatic, and imposing. The gallery teacher was able to validate viewer responses—albeit serious or carefree—and keep the group engaged in the museum experience.

This particular section of transcribed text shows that the visitors appeared to have separated themselves from two conventional assumptions about the museum: First, that the work of art cannot be experienced without touch. In walking into this piece and acknowledging its capacity to envelop the viewer physically, visitors have challenged this notion. Second, that learning in the museum is too formal to be fun. This group of viewers has juxtaposed perceptive questions and thoughts with jovial responses; they have connected with their docent on a friendly level. New connections and realizations are welcomed in a public forum for discussion, instead of a standard curatorial lecture. My observational notes recognize that while answers were initially short, they quickly built into new insights, connections, and realizations, emphasized in the next stage, the liminal.

Content Analysis: The Liminal

The liminal phase is a transitional passage. It is a gray area (Bhabha, 1994) and ambiguity (Deflem, 1991) trumps definition or localization. The liminal serves as a space for the individual to initiate the construction of personal meaning and identity. When using content analysis in the context of liminality, that in-between stage of the museum ritual, I examined the various types of *connections* that visitors and educators were making in their processual ritual (Deflem, 1991) in the museum (see Figure 2). While reviewing the tours, I asked: How might he or she relate the work of art to a past experience or object? What parts of the artwork are allowing the viewer to make new *realizations* about him or herself, our society, or our world? How does this work of art aid or complicate the visitor's initial concepts of identity, or initial opinions about the museum? Is there any indication that ambiguity and uncertainty are paired with new connections or realizations? What words or phrases reference the visitors' struggle at achieving personal meaning making? And, what new meanings is the visitor negotiating through during this stage?

This set of questions stresses the individual's concepts of identity in relation to the artwork, museum environment, and society. However, in recognizing that the liminal is a gray area, I also feel it is important to consider how the viewer might be negotiating his or her way through the artwork. Throughout the following exchanges, which appeared to be liminal in nature, the visitors seemed to transition from simple observations to speculations about the meaning of the object. The following exchange seems to reveal the viewers' process of figuring out the work of art in relation to the artist's society and culture:

> DOCENT ONE: So someone tell me why, what are some similarities in this piece to the piece that we came from?
> VISITOR THREE: It might have to do with his culture.
> DOCENT ONE: Might have to do with his culture, because he's from South America, he's from Brazil, so why do you think that? What clues are he giving you that it's cultural, social—it's got a cultural, social commentary?
> VISITOR THREE: Well I kind of I think that for instance, those discs, the Eucharist discs?
> DOCENT ONE: They're, um, communion wafers.
> VISITOR THREE: Right.
> DOCENT ONE: Can everyone see that? So what do you think that is symbolized with the communion discs?
> VISITOR THREE: I think it's something important to him.
> DOCENT ONE: Something important to him.
> VISITOR THREE: And it might have to do with his culture, maybe?

There seems to be a marked difference here in the observations of the separation stage to the connections and realizations occurring in this liminal stage. The visitors' answers were still short at times, as they continued to lean on the docent to help guide them through the work. Visitors ended their responses with an inquisitive tone. The words "maybe?," "kind of," and "might," suggest that visitors were still relying on the docent for information and support. These speculative words also imply that the viewers were wading through an uncomfortable transition between simple observation and personal meaning making. Indeed, the liminal space can cause disturbance or discomfort (Kavanagh, 2000) and Meireles' body of work, as I discussed in Chapter Three, plays off of internal strife and uncertainty.

However, by reviewing this tour through a liminal lens, one can see that within those zones of struggle, the viewers are beginning to back their observations with remarks about religion and culture. One visitor identified that the spine of communion wafers reflected both cultural and religious beliefs. My notes reference the emergence of religion and culture as topics—making this intermediate part of the tour very distinct and different from the beginning. The dialogue continued to overlap and progress from observations into the recognition of how the artist made conscious decisions in crafting this work:

> DOCENT ONE: Yeah. So something important. What do we think of when we see a communion wafer? Where are communion wafers given?
> MULTIPLE VISITORS: Church.
> DOCENT ONE: In church. So the communion wafers are tying something that is centered in this piece. So what are we tying this with?
> VISITOR FOUR: It's like he's trying to tie monetary wealth to something more physical…
> DOCENT ONE: Right, he's tying something monetary to something physical. Why do we think that is? So think about, we talked about, sort of slave trade, right? A little bit, right? And this is something about the culture as well, right?

> The piece is from Brazil, and first of all what do you see? What's the other type of media in this piece? We have communion wafers. What else?
> MULTIPLE VISITORS: Bones.
> DOCENT ONE: Bones. And what else?
> VISITOR FIVE: Pennies.
> DOCENT ONE: Pennies. And what else. What's a very big part of this piece as well?
> VISITOR SIX: Light.
> DOCENT ONE: The lighting. Right. So if the pennies were, from, let's say 1965, would it look different in here?
> MULTIPLE VISITORS: Yes.
> DOCENT ONE: Why?
> VISITOR SIX: They would be dirty.
> DOCENT ONE: They would be dirtier and what would happen to the light?
> VISITOR SEVEN: Less reflection.

Additionally, visitors connected ideas of how the artist could change this piece with the use of different materials, like an older penny. The docent appeared to facilitate the viewers' transition from uncomfortable or uncertain speculations about the piece of art to bolder statements about materials and meanings. She allowed for personal struggles, delays, and pregnant pauses to occur during this exchange. The comment, "It's like he's trying to tie monetary wealth to something more physical," for example, references the visitor's attempt to decode or extrapolate meanings from the piece of art; the word "trying" hints at this. In attempting to connect past experiences with materials, for instance, the viewers seemed to have placed great effort in negotiating personal meaning out of the artwork. Coupled with that negotiation is the docent's patience and skill in allowing those moments to happen, instead of blurting out one consensus on meaning and moving on to the next artwork.

The docent was able to steer the visitors to think like the artist. In doing so, new realizations were made—and then validated by the docent—about the artwork. Additionally, viewers were mindful of their own presence in the art installation in relation to the plethora of materials within the piece. They understood that physical ideas were working in conjunction with metaphors and symbols. Their insights continued to scaffold into past experiences, memories, or reminders:

> DOCENT ONE: Less reflection. We see these pennies, right, because the light is reflecting off of them and it invites us into the piece. So what do you think that, also this curtain around us is very important, do you think it was put here, do you think there's a reason for it to be the color that it is? So when you think about art and you're looking and experiencing the art, think about everything that's included. So not only is the light a very key piece to this artwork, there's also this black netting that we are allowed to come into, and then everything else is outside, right? What if this were white? It would be a completely different feel, right. So how does the black make us feel? How do we feel when we come in?
> VISITOR SEVEN: Well the black absorbs the light, so it kind of like surrounds you in darkness and makes everything lighter in the piece.
> DOCENT ONE: And is there a place we go that's sort of solemn and dark? What is that place?
> VISITOR EIGHT: The black netting it reminds me a lot of like, I don't know, a funeral, how women tend to wear black veils over their face.
> DOCENT ONE: Yes. So a funeral? That's interesting. So if we take that and we kind of make that, what are we—we've got these communion wafers and they're probably symbolizing the church and you know it's black netting, so think about how you feel when you walk into a or if you've been to a very old church. But it's that feeling when you walk into a really old church and it's bathed in light and it's this dark place that's about religion, right? But then also, we have these, what are above us?
> MULTIPLE VISITORS: Bones.
> DOCENT ONE: Bones. So do you think they're real bones?
> VISITOR NINE: Cattle bones?
> DOCENT ONE: He's presented us with these bones, and this money, and this column of communion wafers.

Also of note was what the docent hears about the "funeral" comment: it was clearly a new approach on the piece for this gallery teacher, so she is seeing the work through different eyes. The docent then qualified that idea and attempted to connect it to the realization that this artwork resembled a religious space. Additionally, one may note that there are still vestiges of the uncomfortable that appear to be occurring within this exchange, as evidenced by "I don't know" or "kind of." However, as noted previously, the docent seems to be fielding those uncertain statements or pauses with positive feedback and questions that scaffold in complexity.

The second group also continued to delve into more complex ideas and principles. I placed the following excerpt from the tour into the liminal category, as both the docent and the visitors began to reference new connections and realizations to oneself, one's society, and one's world in a manner that hinted at decoding the inner complexities and subtleties of the piece. While the following exchange relies heavily on the docent's voice, it appears to reveal a concept that could be of importance to this analysis: the docent has extrapolated her own meanings from this piece and is interjecting those thoughts into conversational dialogue for the tour group to consider. The sharing of the docent's personal ideas about the artwork may aid in creating a bond of trust between her and the group of visitors. In doing so, the gallery teacher may be attempting to navigate through the viewer's uncertainty by providing her own thoughts about the piece, with which the viewer can share his or her own opinions. The tour group's dialogue follows:

> DOCENT TWO: This artist is Brazilian. When I say, um, Central American, Latin American, politics; what do you think of?
> VISITOR ONE: Revolutions.
> DOCENT TWO: Revolutions.
> VISITOR SIX: Corruption.
> DOCENT TWO: Corruption, yes.
> MULTIPLE VISITORS (answering at once): Dictators; rich and poor; murder.
> DOCENT TWO: People who disagreed, disappeared, huh?
> DOCENT TWO: Um, it's very interesting that a lot of South Americans or Latin American artists use their art for political protest. Because sometimes, that's the only way they could. So we have other examples, because we have a lot of Latin American art here at the Blanton. So we have other examples of protest. Now this particular artist was working on a commission he was given; he was given a commission to, uh, to commemorate three hundred years of missionary work. And um, maybe we might guess that this was not exactly what they were hoping for. He was very sympathetic, the artist Cildo Meireles, was very sympathetic to the indigenous people of Brazil. You know, throughout South America, there was conquest. And resources were taken from the land and people were worked very

> hard and many died from disease and work and so the title of this work, *How to Build Cathedrals*, has anybody here gone to Europe and see the cathedrals there?
> VISITOR SEVEN: Oh yes.
> DOCENT TWO: So what are the ceilings like?
> VISITOR SEVEN: Tall; they're a lot taller than that (points to bones)
> MULTIPLE VISITORS: Lofty; ornate.
> DOCENT TWO: Very tall. Very ornate. Yeah. So you have paintings, you have gilding, you have all those sort of things. Uh, have you ever gone to a cathedral and gone down below where they have where things are buried?
> MULTIPLE VISITORS: Crypts; catacombs.
> DOCENT TWO: Um if, like St. Paul's Cathedral. If you're, for example, if you're really famous you can get buried there, like Isaac Newton is buried there. So normally in a cathedral, you have the bones on the bottom and this beautiful ceiling on top. So what's going on here?
> VISITOR THREE: Switched.
> VISITOR SIX: So this is the reverse, this is the gold and the gilt (pointing to pennies).
> DOCENT TWO: He has turned the church upside-down. And—
> VISITOR FIVE: What's the center piece?
> DOCENT TWO: Anybody know what that is? Does it look familiar?
> VISITOR FIVE: A miniature bungee cord.
> DOCENT TWO: A miniature what?
> VISITOR FIVE: Bungee cord.
> DOCENT TWO: Oh! It's um, unconsecrated communion wafers.
> MULTIPLE VISITORS: Ah!; okay!
> VISITOR FIVE: So it's connecting the two pieces?
> DOCENT TWO: Mmmhmm. What does it look like to you? Does it, in context of the artwork, does it look like anything?
> VISITOR EIGHT: To me, it looks like a backbone.
> DOCENT TWO: Yes, a spine or a backbone. That's what I always think of. It's like a spinal cord and the church is turned upside down.

The docent continued to validate responses and relate visitor experiences and thoughts to her own, which, in a way, seemed to place her on the same level as them. Visitors appeared to be fluidly moving between the separation stage, with short observations and references of similarities of materials (such as the communion wafers resembling a backbone, or a bungee cord), and the liminal phase, with complex negotiations about various meanings present within the artwork, as well as connections between cathedrals they had visited in the past or concepts of Latin American society. The transition into the following rite of passage, aggregation, appeared to be rather fluid as well.

Content Analysis: Aggregation

Finally, when referencing *aggregation*, as in the end of the ritual process, in which ideas amalgamate into new knowledge and ways of being, I utilized the following questions: how has the viewer learned something new? Where was the “a-ha!” moment of personal meaning making? In what ways did a *transformation*—a phenomenon of thought— occur during the tour? How were exchanges between the visitor, educator, and artwork illuminated? What meanings and types of meaningful discussion took place during this stage? This stage represents “how society and the individual come together” (Deflem, 1991, p. 15) to end the ritual process with the construction of new meaning and insights (see Figure 2). I believe that it is important to note, however, that I did not categorize aggregation as the tour group’s consensus on the meaning of the work. As argued earlier in Chapter One’s *Problem Statement,* I recognize the acceptance of multiple meanings. Aggregation, then, refers to the process of various meanings coming together to create a transformation and personal meaning making.

Throughout both tours, I noted how the educator, like the visitor, continued to build on new ideas. The *aggregation* stage, in which both the visitor and docent utilized these new concepts and approaches to sublimate into a personally meaningful, transformative state, may be referenced in the following exchange during the first tour. Though this excerpt is heavy with the docent’s remarks and comments, the snippets of visitor statements appear to reference aggregation:

> VISITOR FIVE: I think it’s about the natives and when the Jesuits came in and how the church becomes twisted with the missionaries…and monetary value.

> DOCENT ONE: This piece is about how the Portuguese conquerors came into Brazil and they came into as conquerors, but they weren’t really interested in colonizing like the Spaniards were and they were interested in sort of plundering and getting the wealth out of the land. And what happened is that there were indigenous people who lived there and they were sort of displaced because it wasn’t revolutionary or military generated; it was generated by Jesuit monks that were coming and building, um, cathedrals and they were trying to proselytize to people and it wasn’t bloody but over time they displaced them and the land that they were living on and feeding themselves and working from what was then used for agriculture, and the agriculture was then shipped back to Europe, and that was used to feed Western Europe. So this is a commentary basically on, how we had this idea that South America was being sort of colonized and converted to Christianity through what Western Europe was doing but it was really about the resources, the money. Does anyone else have any comments?
> VISITOR TWO: Why did he use American pennies?
> DOCENT ONE: Well he uses the, um, local currency so if this were in, I’m guessing, but if this were somewhere else he would say on the instruction sheet, he would say: get the whatever your lowest denomination is, and for us, that’s pennies, but also, copper is very, um, relevant to South America as well but it’s this idea of money. So all of these pennies were purchased by the Blanton when we installed. So it’s currency that is native to where it is.
> VISITOR EIGHT: Did he send the bones with the piece or did he send instructions?
> DOCENT ONE: I think the bones were sent and the communion wafers because they were so fragile, they are transferable, so I think that we purchased the wafers and the pennies and I’m not sure about the netting but everything basically came in a box and most of the stuff we installed here at the Blanton and if you have a question about how many pennies there are, where would you go? You could go to the label! Remember: the labels in the Blanton will always tell you the medium of the artwork you’re looking at. So if you guys want to touch and dig down—
> VISITOR SIX: How many are there?
> DOCENT ONE: There are: 600,000. And this gallery was actually built for this piece so this piece can’t go anywhere else in the museum.

This exchange displays how the visitors traversed different stages with their docent in one gallery space, so much so that they essentially reversed roles. The visitors grew confident and started asking the docent questions. In the beginning of the tour, the opposite was true. Observational notes recognized this role reversal as well; I wrote down that visitors grew confident and asked the docent questions. The docent’s knowledge of the artwork appeared to be integral in this stage, also. She provided essential information about the piece and the visitors appeared to use that information to construct new knowledge or create their own interpretations.

At the conclusion of the first tour, I sat down with the docent in an informal interview. She confirmed this rite of passage occurring within the tour, as she was able to negotiate the visitors from feeling uneasy to confident. The most compelling part of this interview occurred when I asked the docent if, at any point during the time in the gallery, some sort of personal meaning making was realized—albeit individually or within the entire group. She recognized a moment of epiphany that occurred on her tour, referencing the visitor who declared, “I think it’s about the natives and when the Jesuits came in and how the church becomes twisted with the missionaries…and monetary value.” The docent’s response to my question elaborates on this transformation:

> I think that based on that last comment the [visitor] who completely got the whole thing, you know, I think they sort of, *the light kind of went off* with some of them…you know, it’s hard to tell with some viewers because they aren’t vocal, they’re shy to speak up, they’re afraid of being wrong, they don’t want you—they don’t have eye contact with you because there’re worried you’re going to call on them…I think that group as a whole, you know, started getting into it because…they were all; talking a little bit more, and even one guy who hadn’t said a word really, maybe one word, was talking for a long time. So I think they just get more comfortable as you talk and they aren’t self-conscious anymore (my emphasis).

This excerpt from my interview with the docent shows the importance of comfort while negotiating various stages of learning and meaning making. The ways in which the docent attempted to create a comfortable transition for her visitors were multiple. First, she slowly navigated visitors from one piece of art to another in the museum space. And through a process of validating viewers’ thoughts and asking questions that crescendoed in complexity and meaning, the gallery teacher was able to build a trusting relationship with the tour group. Finally, the visitors grew confident enough to ask their docent questions. That gallery teacher was then able to answer those queries with not only essential information, but also conversation.

Similar to the first tour group, the second tour also navigated their way from simple observations and short responses to connections about society and past experiences. The viewers also started to ask their docent questions. Additionally, the tour progressed into an active conversation amongst the visitors. Those visitors grew more secure with each exchange and were able to transcend into the *aggregation* phase, where new ideas amalgamated into transformative epiphanies:

> VISITOR NINE: And was he being derogatory then?
> DOCENT TWO: That would be my guess.
> (Laughter from group).
> VISITOR TEN: Yeah, three hundred years of…
> (Laughter).
> DOCENT TWO: He was, he was, uh, (VISITOR TWO: after all the oppression) issuing a complaint about the way the indigenous people were…because um, cattle leg, these are cattle bones that are resourced, so it's a commentary about how the resources were used, um, how the people were used. What's the overall feeling, if you tried to narrow in on an emotion that you get from standing here and looking at this and contemplating the contrast, the shininess, the connection, the black?
> MULTIPLE VISITORS (answering at once): Money; humanity; the church; sadness.
> DOCENT TWO: Sadness. Anybody else have a take or a feeling on what you get from this?
> VISITOR ELEVEN: Is there a right answer?
> DOCENT TWO: No, there are never right answers in art. All answers are good answers. It's really about what it means to you.
> VISITOR ELEVEN: The reflection from the pennies, I mean, it, it's, it wants to be uplifting, but then you see the bones and it's like the contrast.
> DOCENT TWO: Boy, he just conflicts the heck out of us, doesn't he?
> VISITOR ELEVEN: Yeah.
> VISITOR NINE: Well if you've ever seen cathedrals in South America, they're built on slave labor practically, or people giving their pennies to the church, and the church is rich and ornate, of course it does last for many more years than those people's lives, so.
> VISITOR TEN: But that wasn't unique to South America.
> VISITOR NINE: No, no you could go to Europe and—

> VISITOR TWELVE: It was the day, yeah; the age, and time. It was the way things were done.
> DOCENT TWO: And those churches did preserve, I mean, a lot of wonderful art we have today, is because the churches were the patrons of the art. They used art to tell their story, um, but, I think you know, it—
> VISITOR TWELVE: In all things, there can be good in some things.
> DOCENT TWO: Yeah, and I think he wanted us, I think the art was to make us question and have conflicting feelings about it.
> VISITOR SIX: Well, if we gave all our money to the poor and none to the artwork, there'd be nothing surviving and the poor would still be poor.
> DOCENT TWO: Yes.

The visitors continued to rely on their docent for support and facilitation of discussion; in fact, their gallery teacher even reassured these viewers with the idea that there are no correct answers in art. But in transcribing and analyzing this dialogue, there appears to be some sort of transformation in less than ten minutes. Visitors' statements grew from mere observations about materials to incredibly complex social issues. For example, there is discussion of privilege and poverty present within this discussion that are problematic; in reading this transcript, the docent appears to be justifying the church's actions with the claim that part of the reason there is beautiful art in museums is because the church commissioned it.

My aim in including this excerpt from the tour is not to discuss whether one agrees or disagrees with these statements. Rather, I believe that the exchange details how the docent acknowledges profoundly deep social issues in a way that seems to facilitate discussion, opinion, and the making of personal meaning from her visitors. Indeed, eight minutes earlier, the group would more than likely not have been prepared to tackle these issues as they have done in this stage of aggregation. There has been a transformation at work here that has enabled the visitors to meet intense issues head on.

Another aspect of this particular dialogue is intriguing and further implies that the viewers are in the aggregation stage. I made notes about how these senior citizens related this country's past to their own lives; namely, the comment, "it was the day, yeah; the age, and time. It was the way things were done" contains a sense of reflection about the past that appears to aid in meaning making and transformation. By the word, "past," I mean not only the time when cathedrals flourished, but also the visitors' life experience— "the way things were done" may refer to when the visitor was younger. That statement connotes a reflection on not only how times have changed three or four hundred years later, but also during one's own life span. In viewing Meireles' piece, it seems that the visitors have learned to confront personal and conflicting emotions with a very enlightened conversation. Furthermore, this excerpt appears to show how the docent acts more as a facilitator of conversation or bridge between stages than as an authoritative lecturer, despite the fact that she does talk a considerable amount of the time.

After this second tour was finished, I interview the docent, whose thoughts on facilitating personal meaning making in the museum were intriguing for this study:

> My goal is to get them to look at it and react to it and analyze their reactions, how do they feel, what do they think of when they see this…it's about connecting and asking, "how does this affect me?" "Why did he do this?" "Why did he do that?" You know, one of the joys of touring is that people see things differently. And I was learning, too, getting a deeper understanding, and seeing it through other people's eyes.

The docent communicated that she, too, was also capable to achieving some sort of personal meaning about the art object or the museum experience. By viewing this tour through a liminal lens, it appears that the docent moved from an authoritative position to a cooperative role that facilitated the learning process for the group through conversation and acceptance of multiple insights. Furthermore, the docent conceded that those insights assisted in her own personal experience with the work of art.

Perhaps what is most interesting about both of these tours is that they are quite standard. Many museum tours undergo these steps and processes of questioning and answering. Yet by looking at this tour through a lens of liminality, it was evident that there were various tiers of learning throughout the visit, which transitioned from uncomfortable to conversational. I noted that even if these queries were only observational or factually-based, they revealed that the visitor and the educator collaboratively worked through the stages and the meanings of the piece together.

Summation of Chapter Four and a Look Ahead to Chapter Five

This chapter has revealed the data from two museum tours, dated November 19, 2009 and January 20, 2010. I first began this section with an additional review of the study's methodology, where I detailed the reasons for the elimination of the second tour, dated November 24, 2009. The remaining two tours I evaluated through a methodology of content analysis of transcripts from video and audio footage, exit interviews with docents, field notes, observations made during the viewing of video and audio recordings, and review of pertinent literature, specifically about the three main categories of my content analysis: separation, the liminal, and aggregation.

In conducting this research and analyzing the results from the two tours, I found multiple implications about this study, which I reveal in the next, conclusive chapter. It is my aim to answer my central research questions with these results and implications, then conclude with suggestions for future research in this field, as well as a closing statement.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

This study has utilized the four previous chapters to discuss the theory of liminality, as well as its pertinence to museum education. I will begin this concluding chapter by reviewing important points made throughout this thesis. I will then answer my central research questions with data collected in Chapter Four. This chapter provides the analysis and implications of those results. I will then provide suggestions for future research in this field.

Summation of Major Points Made throughout the Study

I have maintained throughout this thesis that a postmodern approach to theory and practice is absolutely critical in the advancement of museum education. I believe that in any discipline, new viewpoints are necessary—so that we, as both humans and scholars, can continue to learn about the dynamic world in which we live. This study advocated the use of liminal theory as a postmodern lens to better understand museum education practices and rituals. There is no current practice of liminality. Rather, this thesis aimed to use liminal theory as a way to illuminate the existing relationships between museum objects, visitors, and gallery teachers.

I began this thesis with a quote from Cildo Meireles, the artist who created the installation in the Blanton Museum of Art, *Missão/Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)*. This piece was a major component in the tours I observed for this study (see Figure 1). As outlined in Chapter Three of this thesis, Cildo Meireles is a Brazilian installation artist who was part of the Neoconcretist group. His pieces are penetrable (Presnall, 2002), meaning that the viewer can literally enter the work of art. This component makes each of his artworks active spaces that reference liminal theory.

In 1975, this artist commented on Marcel Duchamp's ready-made objects and creative perspective. Meireles alleged: "Duchamp's contribution today has the merit of forcing the perception of art, not as a perception of artistic objects but as a *phenomenon of thought*" (my emphasis) (Barnitz, 1992, p. 35).

These italicized words have graced this thesis with its title and they have stressed three particularly intriguing concepts for the field of art and museum education: first, the artist helps to initiate not only the object, but also the thought process. For example, when a drop of paint touches a canvas, in that moment, possibilities for interpretation, meaning making, and opinion are born. Secondly, one's interpretative perception of an object is necessary in what defines it as art. The relationship and interaction between the viewer and the object is critical to the artwork. And finally, these relationships between the artist, object, and viewer are fluid, active, and transformative processes—they are phenomena.

This phenomenon of thought focuses on one's transitions and processes of negotiating new knowledge. One can see these concepts' applicability to Victor Turner's (1977, 1982) *liminal* theory. Turner originally initiated this theory as an expansion of Arnold van Gennep's (Belmont, 1974) *rites de passage*. In an anthropological sense, these two ideas are concerned with how the individual physically and emotionally traverses from one stage of life to the next. According to Turner (1977, 1982), the liminal is a gray area that exists in between hierarchical, preconceived ideas—and this space is ripe for learning, as well as the construction of self identity.

This intermediate space, which is derived from the Greek word for "threshold," is a transitioning realm that is suspended "betwixt and between" (Turner, 1977, p. 95) various states of being. Turner studied this theory by examining Ndembu tribal rituals, watching society members participate and perform through multiple identities which, in turn, aided these individuals to mature. Society members underwent various stages to personally grow in new ways.

Carol Duncan (1994, 1995) concretely related this theory to the museum environment. She proposed that museums also contain levels of performance and ritual. In museums, the liminal is a zone in which visitors and objects can engage in a transformative dialogue. The viewer of art, too, undergoes a rite of passage. This visitor can grow both pedagogically and personally; new ideas and concepts are learned and linked to past ideas, social concepts, and individual experiences. The visitor evolves in this space by actively sharing with the museum educator and the art object.

This study's objectives were to understand this processual museum ritual and transformation by clarifying the transactions between museum educators, viewers, and artifacts. It also aimed to understand the ways in which liminality permitted personal meaning making to occur in the museum. The manner in which I sought to answer these questions was through a cross-case study. I observed docent-led museum tours at the Blanton Museum of Art in Austin, Texas.

This cross-case study examined two of those tours in relation to liminal theory. In the following section, I will revisit my initial hypotheses. I will then answer my central research questions with empirically analyzed data and implications from this study.

Initial Hypotheses

I had several hypotheses about this study as I began. First, it was my assumption that applying liminal theory within the museum environment and ritual would illuminate the relationships between the museum educator and the visitor. I believed that sharing opinions, thoughts, and experiences in a dialogic exchange could help create a bond between these two parties. By analyzing the data from both tours, I aimed to understand whether or not this hypothesis was correctly confirmed.

Additionally, my initial speculation about the principle artwork in this study, *Missão/ Missões* (*How to Build Cathedrals)*, argued that using a liminal framework while observing museum tours would help to understand new meanings and associations that would enrich the object and the museum experience further.

Furthermore, I also expected that Cildo Meireles' *Missão/ Missões* (*How to Build Cathedrals)* would pair with liminal concepts well, as the penetrable artwork emphasizes shared exchanges with its viewers. And finally, I believed in the potential for this theory to illuminate other art objects—not simply Meireles' piece—and experiences for both the visitor and gallery teacher.

Central Research Questions and Implications of Data

This study was anchored by the following questions: How can liminal theory, as applied to museum education, illuminate the relationships between gallery teachers, visitors, and objects? And, in what ways does liminality allow for visitors' personal meaning making to occur?

The three categories that I used in my content analysis—separation, liminal, and aggregation—as well as the field notes, video observations, docent interviews, and transcripts from video and audio recordings made during each museum tour answered my central research questions in multiple ways. This data also served to confirm or challenge my original hypotheses.

The first component of my central research questions had intriguing answers. I asked: How can liminal theory, as applied to museum education, illuminate the relationships between gallery teachers, visitors, and objects? In reviewing and further developing this theory within a museum setting, I argued that the rites of passage are fluid; they are not static, finite levels. Rather, the visitors and docent can traverse through various tiers of learning together and vestiges of these rites can permeate other stages. Time and space are inherently more organic and less defined and, therefore, these stages can exist simultaneously (Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Xiong, & Bickel, 2006). Furthermore, the application of liminal theory within the museum environment, specifically as a lens through which to examine a standard docent-led tour, revealed four particularly interesting implications.

First, the relationship between the gallery teacher and visitor initially relies not only on the docent's ability to facilitate discussion with basic questions about the work, but also on simple observations from the viewer. The validation of responses is key in the process of separation. Often, the docents would comment on visitor responses with encouraging remarks or repetition of phrases (evidenced in both tours), the latter of which is a staple of Abigail Housen (2007) and Philip Yenawine's (Mayer, 2007) Visual Thinking Strategies. However, the docents on both tours deviated from this VTS practice by stepping in and engaging in enlightened conversation, then steering the dialogue toward new connections and realizations about the artwork.

Second, the liminal phases of both tours revealed that viewers have to first engage in the process of separation and simple observations before they can feel comfortable delving into social or personal issues. Levels of discomfort during this stage—often signified by speculative words such as “kind of” or “might,” as well as silences and pauses in response to the docent’s questions—were obvious. The visitor wrestled with those uncomfortable reflections and thoughts about the art object. After, a sense of personal meaning making and new connections with an artwork in a museum were achieved. Both of the docents acknowledged these struggles, issues, and moments of silence. They did so by patiently waiting for responses and then relating the piece to previous artworks they had seen in the tour, or by recognizing past experiences. Once suspended betwixt and between this liminal phase of new connections and realizations about one’s own identity, society, or world, the visitor still continued to rely on the docent for information and validation—highlighting the collaborative journey of meaning making within the museum.

Though the docents were not versed in liminal theory prior to the observation of the tour, their acknowledgement of and patience with the visitor’s struggles subsequently allowed for new meanings and new associations to occur. Docents were able to field the viewers’ initial detachment from social norms and unanchored negotiations of spaces and meanings. They worked together to balance the separation and liminal phases with cogent navigations and epiphanies about the art object. In doing so, it is obvious that the success of personal meaning making in the museum should not be determined by the visitors’ ability to come to conclusions without any assistance from an outside party. Additionally, personal meaning making should not imply a seamless transition from uncertainty to transformation; rather, the lens of liminal theory balanced discomfort and ambiguity with moments of epiphany and clarity. The liminal stage championed a collaborative journey of meaning making within the museum between the visitor, the museum educator, and the art object. Therefore, this gray area is crucial. Those areas “betwixt and between” (Turner, 1977, p. 95) are valuable in the context of museum education.

Third, the transformation of the visitor was most evident in the transition from the liminal into the aggregation phase. The docent worked to navigate viewers through all three stages comfortably. The result was that visitors began to engage in dialogue with one another, with docent as a facilitator or bridge. This is most clearly evidenced in the second tour, in which the tour group began to have nostalgic discussions about social class, how society used to function, and the fairness in both of these topics. In this phase of the second tour, the docent merely had to punctuate the conversation with small phrases or observations in order to elicit viewer responses. Those responses had insightfully progressed from remarks about materials to cultural issues. The overall result was a tour that, despite periods of uncertainty and struggle, was rich in transformative experience.

Additionally, during the aggregation phase, a reversal of roles occurred between the gallery teacher and the viewer of art. After negotiating the rites of passage, the visitor was comfortable and confident enough to ask the docent questions. In the first stages of the tour, the opposite was the case; the gallery educator was in a position of authority, asking the viewers for their thoughts. However, in this aggregation stage, visitors would pepper the museum educator with new insights and queries. The docent further facilitated this stage by providing a combination of essential or contextual information about the piece (evidenced most clearly in the first tour) with personal opinions and thoughts about the artwork (evidenced most clearly in the second tour). This reveals that creating a level of comfort in the museum relies on a successful combination of information about the artwork, as well as meaningful discussion of cultural or personal issues that are relevant to the visitor.

This concept echoes key issues that relate to the second part of my central research question. That question asked, “In what ways does liminality allow for visitors’ personal meaning making to occur?” Falk and Dierking (2000) relate personal meaning making to learning within a personal context. The authors note several facets of this type of learning: (a) “[it] flows from appropriate motivational and emotional cues”; (b) “[it] is facilitated by personal interest”; and (c) “‘new’ knowledge is constructed from a foundation of prior experience and knowledge” (p. 16). Understanding the individual’s capacity to learn in a personally relevant way was clarified by liminal theory in three major ways, which all relate to Falk and Dierking’s (2000) arguments on learning in a personal context.

First, in analyzing the tour through a lens of liminality, I argued that visitors initially engage in a stage of separation. In both tours that I observed, the docent reassured and validated viewer comments and feelings in this first rite (and throughout the rest of the tour as well; neither of the tours showed the museum educator disagreeing with or ignoring visitor responses). This step appealed to the visitor’s emotions by nurturing their responses in the creation of a comfortable journey with the museum educator. It also motivated visitors to begin answering these simple observational questions with short responses. The stage of liminal theory served as a warm up that enabled viewers to get their feet wet before tackling bigger themes and ideas present in the art installation.

Second, liminal theory displayed personal meaning making occurring within the museum through the emphasis on the individual’s past experiences. For example, one docent asked her visitors if they had ever been to a cathedral before, and many replied that they indeed had. These past experiences helped to build on ideas present in the object and, as a result, create new knowledge. Visitors were able to create links between their own lives and concepts of identity with issues addressed by the artwork, with the docent increasing the complexity of questions and concepts gradually. Moreover, personal meaning making was realized through the relation of the artwork to the individual—albeit socially, culturally, experientially, or even corporeally.

Third, the aggregation phase of liminal theory displayed the visitor’s successful navigation of creating meaning out of the artwork that was personally relevant, so much so that viewers were encouraged to ask the docent questions and create mature discussion. There was personal interest at stake in both tours, as evidenced by the visitors wanting to know more about the artwork; they did so by asking the docent questions. Liminality allows for personal meaning making to occur through a process of gradual and encouraged interaction with the docent and object, resulting in the visitor asking the docent questions to aid in the construction of new knowledge.

However, there was a specific implication that resulted from my data collection and analysis that while I had vaguely hypothesized, was not pinpointed as part of my central research questions. I had initially speculated that liminal theory would aid in illuminating the bond of trust or connections about artworks made between visitors and museum educators. However, my central research questions inquired about the possibility for liminal theory to illuminate the process of personal meaning making for mainly the visitor. What resulted from this research, though, is that liminal theory is a useful lens through which to recognize the docent as an active learner and participant in the tour process. The second docent, for example, commented during her interview that one of the best aspects of a museum tour is seeing another's perspective. Liminal theory emphasized the capability for the docent to learn and construct new meanings from discussion and interaction with the visitors; their relationship—like the rites of passage (separation, the liminal, and aggregation)—is reciprocal and fluid (Ebitz, 2007).

The interaction between the art educator and the visitor is a mutually transformative journey through the museum. In analyzing these visits to the museum through the use of liminal theory, the tour practice has been enhanced in a postmodern way that embraces conversation, new insights, and contemporary ways of looking at the art object. Museum educational practice has evolved from mere curatorial lecture to an active, engaging, and personally meaningful journey for all parties.

Suggestions for Future Research

I have several suggestions for future research. First, I feel that it would be beneficial to follow an entire tour. In doing so, the researcher would be able to witness how a docent might weave various ideas and themes about artworks together into a cohesive museum visit. It is my suspicion that visitors and gallery teachers would continue to build upon past concepts in the tour—as well as visitors' previous life experiences—to create new epiphanies and realizations throughout the duration of the visit (I would also be curious to see if the processes of separation, liminality, and aggregation continue to repeat from one artwork to the next). Insightful comments about the piece in this study, *Missão/Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)*, may have been made in other galleries of the museum, yet in staying in only one space for this study, I was unable to witness any of those interactions. This suggestion for future research could possibly validate my theories further.

I also imagine that it would be helpful to conduct exit interviews or surveys at some point after the tour to see what was learned or what visitors remembered about their tour experience. My study did interview the docents of each tour; however, it may be valuable to further probe the visitors with similar questions. Additionally, I find that a similar case study of museum tours with different genres of art would challenge this study's findings. It would be interesting to see if these rites of passage are still appropriate with less modern or vastly different artworks. Meireles' piece, for example, lent itself exceptionally well to this study because of the artist's fascination with liminality and visitor experience. It would be intriguing to understand this study's pertinence to museum education when applied with other types of art.

Moreover, future research in this field may gain new insight from utilizing a neglected demographic in this study: children. Both docents I interviewed referenced how exciting it is to pair Cildo Meireles' art installation with a young audience. One of the reasons I selected adults to participate in this study was because I thought it would be advantageous to have the gallery teachers and the visitors at the same level of experience. While young audiences may not have the same experiences as an adult docent, I still believe that their comments and insights would be fascinating, especially when viewed through a lens of liminality.

Finally, one of the questions I posited earlier in the thesis was what the possibilities are for developing a working praxis around this theory. After completing this study, I am still attempting to figure out how one might create a practice of liminality. In making suggestions for future research, I wonder if such a thing would be possible, based on the gray, ambiguous nature of the liminal. An assessment rubric would be impossible, for example, as it opposes the very idea of liminality, which privileges the space of negotiating— and not the space where one meaning or answer is identified. If one were to create some sort of agent or liminal praxis, it would have to be performed in a way that does not pinpoint or localize, but rather places value in extension, negotiation, and the spaces between. This final suggestion for future research is admittedly undefined and ambiguous, however, I think what this last suggestion implies is that the further scrutiny of liminal theory within museum education is necessary in the advancement of this field.

Closing

This study has discussed liminal theory within the museum environment at great length. It began with the identification of this theory from Victor Turner's (1977, 1982) anthropological perspectives on the rites of passage during tribal ritual. In relating this concept to the museum—as Carol Duncan (1994, 1995) initially did and upon which I expanded both within and with this study—it is evident that there is a transformative ritual process of creating new knowledge that occurs within the galleries of an art institution. This rings true for not only the visitor, but also the museum educator.

By utilizing three aspects of the rites of passage (separation, liminal, and aggregation) to observe three museum tours (two of which were elaborated on this study), the relationships between visitors, object, and docents—as well as the process of negotiation and meaning making—were illuminated. Additionally, several conclusions were reached. Simple observations about the artwork, paired with the detachment from normative or preconceived structures, lead to connections, realizations, and negotiations about the artwork, one’s own identity, society, and world. As a result, personal meaning making was realized in a way that was transformative for the visitor, as well as the gallery teacher. As argued earlier, all of these rites of passage are fluid and scaffold in tiers, similar to the building of new knowledge.

By allowing this process to occur, the visitor is encouraged to reverse roles with the docent; the individual will navigate through discomfort and uncertainty to begin asking the gallery teacher questions. In the beginning of the tours observed, the docent initiated and facilitated inquiry; at the end of these tours, the opposite occurred, as visitors had successfully negotiated their way through the meanings and stories present within the artwork.

This described discomfort, however, plays an important role within the liminal stage, as it allows the visitor and the educator to negotiate through an artwork’s meanings together. The zone of struggle present within the liminal phase can highlight the collaborative relationship between these parties. Furthermore, these disturbances can allow one to work and grapple with various ideas or concepts, inevitably aiding in the progression of that desired level of comfort after one personally deciphers a work of art. Often, the museum educator fears silence, as the visitor struggles to answer a question or engage in conversation. The lens of liminal theory, though, reveals that those cricket chirps are simply part of a process of understanding an artwork in a personally relevant way; that struggle should be championed, because the docent can then work with the visitor to push through that rite of passage together.

These examples of conclusions reached through this study indicate how crucial it is for museum educators to continue to reexamine and redefine museum tours and experiences in ways that are personally relevant and that continue to accept multiple perspectives and stories. For well over thirty years (Mayer, 2007; Henry, 2010), museum educators have been utilizing postmodern practices to make their institutions more accommodating and accepting of visitors' multiple viewpoints and personal meaning making. Additionally, I think that, as this study has detailed, the spaces between these perspectives and stories are just as important as the stories themselves. Even the uncomfortable pauses and delays are valuable in the construction of new knowledge.

I believe that it is our purpose as educators to continue to expand practices—to serve visitors in the most personally meaningful ways possible. One of the questions I asked during the course of this study, for instance, was how museum educators might give their visitors and pupils a more enlightening, transforming experience. It would be shortsighted and hypocritical of me to assume that there is no one, correct answer to this question.

Instead, I advocate the continued development and scrutiny of educational techniques that identify the potential of liminal theory to enlighten works of art, ourselves, and our world—and to make the phenomenon of thought, honestly, less of a "phenomenon." I see great potential in the practices of museum educators to instead treat that space of interpretive perception as a recognized and daily occurrence in the museum from which to learn, grow, and most importantly, transform.

Appendix A: Sample Consent Forms

Visitor Informed Consent

Title: *A Phenomenon of Thought: Liminal Theory in the Museum*
IRB PROTOCOL # 2009-09-0072
Conducted By: Lisa Christine DeLosso of The University of Texas at Austin, Art Education
Telephone: (609) 602-3524; E-mail: ldelosso@mail.utexas.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact current or future relationships with UT Austin or participating sites. To do so simply tell the researcher you wish to stop participation. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent for your records.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate three museum tours to recognize how museum visitors connect with both the object and the gallery teacher, and; to understand what benefits may exist when liminal theory is applied within the museum environment.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to: participate in one standard, docent-led museum tour in the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art. **During that time the Principal Investigator will observe, audio-record and videotape the tour.**

Total estimated time of participation in this study is one hour.

Risks that are currently unforeseeable may occur during participation in this study. If you wish to discuss the information above or any other risks you may experience, you may ask questions now or call the Principal Investigator listed on the front page of this form.

Benefits of participating in the study include enhanced understanding of the museum environment and objects upon completion of the tour.

Compensation will not be given to participants in this study.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:

- The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in any study.
- Interviews or sessions will be audio or videotaped; tapes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them; and, tapes will be kept in a secure place and will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the investigator and her associates. Finally, tapes will be erased after they are transcribed or coded.

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and (study sponsors, if any) have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the research please contact Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or the Office of Research Support at (512) 471-8871 or email: orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. **I consent to participate in the study and I agree for the Principal Investigator to audio-record and video-tape my involvement in the study**.

Signature:____ Date: __________________

____ Date: ___________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Investigator:___________________________ Date: __________________

Docent Informed Consent

Title: *A Phenomenon of Thought: Liminal Theory in the Museum*
Conducted By: Lisa Christine DeLosso of The University of Texas at Austin, Art Education
Telephone: (609) 602-3524; E-mail: ldelosso@mail.utexas.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact current or future relationships with UT Austin or participating sites. To do so simply tell the researcher you wish to stop participation. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent for your records.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate three museum tours to recognize how museum visitors connect with both the object and the gallery teacher, and; to understand what benefits may exist when liminal theory is applied within the museum environment.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to: lead one adult tour in the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art and include Cildo Meireles' *Missão/ Missões (How to Build Cathedrals)* as an object for discussion during said tour. **During that time the Principal Investigator will observe, audio-record and videotape the tour.** The Principal Investigator will also informally interview you after the conclusion of the tour.

Total estimated time of participation in this study is two hours.

Risks that are currently unforeseeable may occur during participation in this study. If you wish to discuss the information above or any other risks you may experience, you may ask questions now or call the Principal Investigator listed on the front page of this form.

Benefits of participating in the study include enhanced understanding of the museum environment/objects upon completion of the tour, and; a heightened knowledge of liminal theory as it applies to the museum environment and its possible integration into the field of museum education.

Compensation will not be given to participants in this study.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:

- The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in any study.
- Interviews or sessions will be audio or videotaped; tapes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them; and, tapes will be kept in a secure place and will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the investigator and her associates. Finally, tapes will be erased after they are transcribed or coded.

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from

The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and (study sponsors, if any) have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation call the researcher conducting the study. Her name, phone number, and e-mail address is at the top of this page. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the research please contact Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or the Office of Research Support at (512) 471-8871 or email: orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

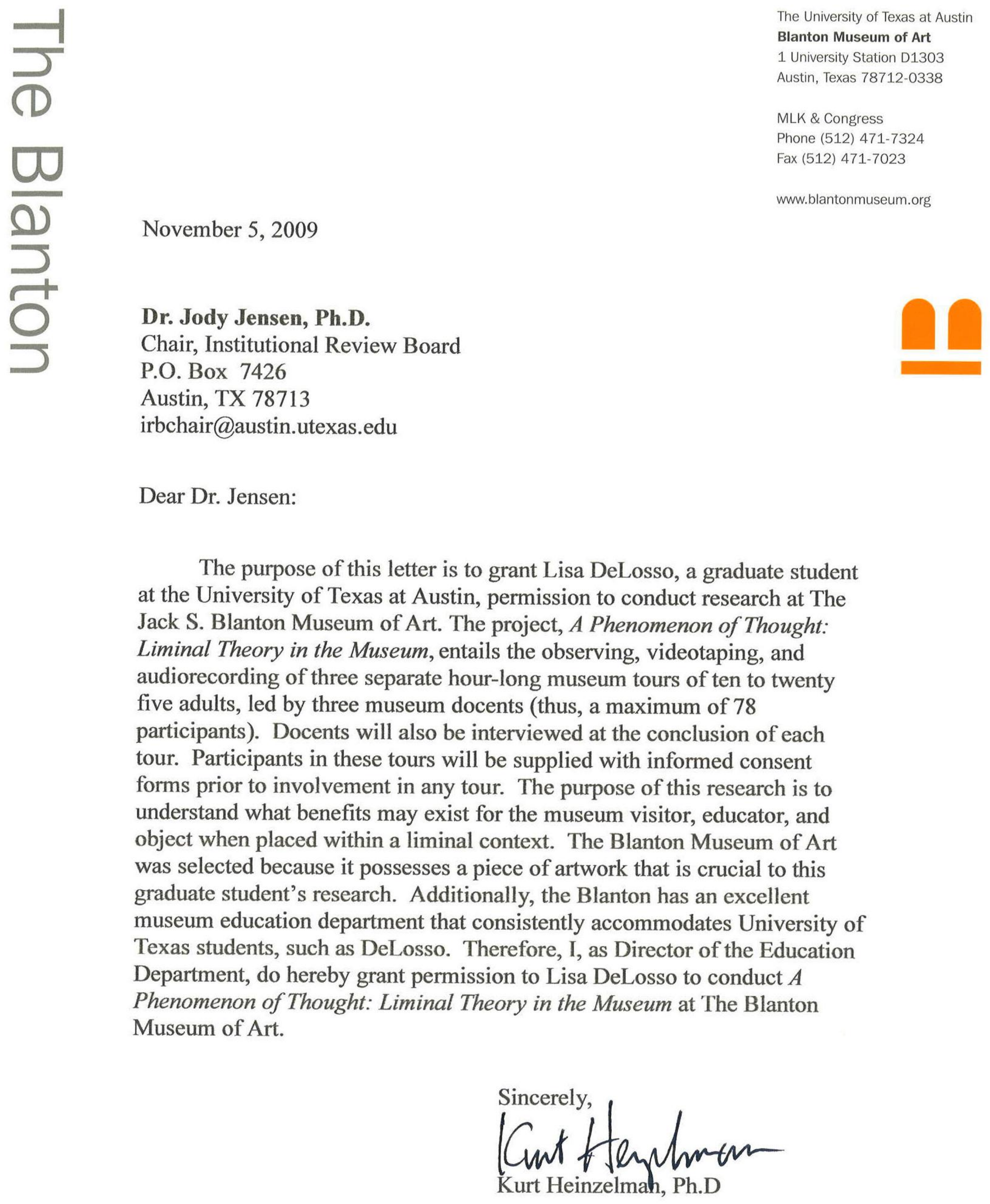
I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. **I consent to participate in the study and I agree for the Principal Investigator to audio-record and video-tape my involvement in the study**.

Signature:____ Date: ___________________

____ Date: ____________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Investigator:___________________________ Date: ___________________

Appendix B: Site Approval Letter from the Blanton Museum of Art



The Blanton

The University of Texas at Austin
Blanton Museum of Art
1 University Station D1303
Austin, Texas 78712-0338

MLK & Congress
Phone (512) 471-7324
Fax (512) 471-7023

www.blantonmuseum.org

November 5, 2009

Dr. Jody Jensen, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
P.O. Box 7426
Austin, TX 78713
irbchair@austin.utexas.edu

Dear Dr. Jensen:

The purpose of this letter is to grant Lisa DeLosso, a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin, permission to conduct research at The Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art. The project, *A Phenomenon of Thought: Liminal Theory in the Museum*, entails the observing, videotaping, and audiorecording of three separate hour-long museum tours of ten to twenty five adults, led by three museum docents (thus, a maximum of 78 participants). Docents will also be interviewed at the conclusion of each tour. Participants in these tours will be supplied with informed consent forms prior to involvement in any tour. The purpose of this research is to understand what benefits may exist for the museum visitor, educator, and object when placed within a liminal context. The Blanton Museum of Art was selected because it possesses a piece of artwork that is crucial to this graduate student's research. Additionally, the Blanton has an excellent museum education department that consistently accommodates University of Texas students, such as DeLosso. Therefore, I, as Director of the Education Department, do hereby grant permission to Lisa DeLosso to conduct *A Phenomenon of Thought: Liminal Theory in the Museum* at The Blanton Museum of Art.

Sincerely,
Kurt Heinzelman
Kurt Heinzelman, Ph.D

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Vita

Lisa C. DeLosso was born in Cape May Court House, New Jersey. She received her undergraduate degrees in Art History and Art Education: Museums and Cultural Institutions, from The Pennsylvania State University in May 2007. In August 2007, she entered the Graduate School at The University of Texas at Austin. And in 2009, while completing her graduate degree, she rode a bicycle over 4,500 miles from Austin, Texas to Anchorage, Alaska as part of the Texas 4000 for Cancer student organization at The University of Texas at Austin.

Permanent Address: 115 East Woodland Avenue
Cape May Court House, New Jersey, 08210

This thesis was typed by the author.