



ETHICAL ENCOUNTERS THROUGH TRAVELLING IMAGES

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Abstract: This article brings together two broad areas in arts-based research: curation and the study of how images travel. At the centre of this work is a concern for what might be described as “ethical encounters”, drawing on an autoethnographic project working with family photographs, reenactments, and travel from Canada to the U.K. as the “Old Country”. Questions about who is in the picture and what is said and not said about a family photograph arise about what can be shown, and about stories of what is left out. But this work with family photos and travel does not sit alone; rather, it gives rise to questions about curating participant-generated images in community-based research, including the drawings of war-affected children and photos on gender transformation produced in a variety of Global South contexts. The article concludes with the idea that the concept of travelling offers opportunities to challenge normative, colonial, and hegemonic ideas; maybe even advancing social change.

Keywords: audiences; curation; decolonial practices; ethics; photo reenactments; visual methodologies

Artful Futures: Reflections on the Evolution of the Arts in Research

As academics steeped in the rules of funding and institutional protocols, we are typically living our lives years well in advance of the now. A research proposal that requires a letter of intent and then a full proposal “if invited” will take several years from conceptualization to award (or rejection). Depending on your institution and its sabbatic leave regulations, you are sure to be imagining in a compelling way what you could or would be doing, or might be doing, almost two years ahead of doing anything. Obviously issues of living with uncertainty are key, alongside tolerating high levels of ambiguity, and a type of travel—especially time travel—that we rarely acknowledge even to ourselves, let alone write about or study. The following is what I imagined including in a sabbatical leave application submitted in the late summer of 2023:

I am planning a book-length project organized around what I am terming “travelling pedagogies, memory-work, and arts-based research”. Building on conceptualizings articulated in a chapter, “(Re)tracing Our Steps in Arts-Based Research: A Case for Travelling Practices”, which maps out a travelling framework, the proposed book will expand on a series of writings completed over the last seven years that take up various notions of travelling pedagogies. This series will include charting over time longitudinal research and retracings, alongside several chapters based on fieldwork to be completed during the sabbatical leave, based on settler travelling practices in family histories.

It didn't seem too ambitious at the time I wrote the short proposal, and it all seemed well aligned with recent writings I had been doing on travelling (Mitchell, 2024; Mitchell et al., in press; Starr & Mitchell, 2024) as a framework for deepening an understanding of transnational exchange, both in relation to possibilities and critique. My 2024 publication “(Re)tracing Our Steps in Arts-Based Education Research: A Case for Travelling Practices” offers a mapping out, of sorts, of the various ways that I am envisioning travelling in relation to arts-based methods and in relation to academic identity. In that publication, I also highlight some of the tools and methods that might be appropriate to studying travelling practices, including memory-work and longitudinal “over time” studies. While I hint at some of the trickiness of this work, particularly in the context of coloniality and ethics, it was clear to me that my sabbatical fieldwork would need to be an occasion to go deeper. What I hadn't accounted for was how several image-based projects, including my family histories sabbatical leave fieldwork, would converge and intersect to inform ideas and interrogations of curation and the ethics of travelling images more broadly. For the purposes of this article, I will contain myself primarily to the fieldwork of the sabbatical leave project but, in the later sections, I point towards where I think this work is going and how this work can advance interrogations of image and ethics in visual and arts-based communities.

Curatorial Dreams and Propositions

In writing this article I was inspired by Shelley Ruth Butler and Erica Lehrer's (2016) edited volume *Curatorial Dreams: Critics Imagine Exhibitions*. Butler and Lehrer invited humanities and social science colleagues to

draw up blueprints for exhibitions that reflect their particular research and that respond to their own critiques of exhibits or of broader social landscapes. This is an unusual approach; scholars are highly trained in analysis and critique, but are generally unpracticed at offering constructive solutions to the problems they identify, let alone in the form of a public exhibition. (2016, p. 30)

While I do not totally agree with their assessment of the impact of scholars in the social sciences and humanities, I was nonetheless drawn to the book for its recognition of the imaginative possibilities of curation and how we assemble and display images and objects. On the one hand, Butler and Lehrer were on the mark in the sense that curation and exhibition are often seen as out-of-bounds. On the other, for those of us who work in arts-based research, there is a wide-open arena for deepening an understanding of how curation can land into community-based research. Indeed, I think I am drawn to this book, albeit in a somewhat frustrated way, because of my ongoing community-based research, much of which includes community-based exhibitions of photovoice projects and drawings, alongside the many screening events of Cellfilms produced in so many communities. In the last two decades, I have been involved in, directed, supervised, or examined, in one way or another, dozens of photovoice projects where students, teachers, health care workers, agricultural workers, girls with disabilities, and young people in communities experiencing high rates of HIV and AIDS have staged photos, created tableaux, documented scenes, imagined symbolic and abstract images, created captions, written curatorial statements, selected photos that they thought most impactful, and mounted exhibitions in school halls, community centres, and outside petrol stations. These included clipping photos to chain link fences, stretching clotheslines full of images from whatever was at hand, and laying out drawings on tables or against the backs of chairs.¹ Elsewhere we have referred to this work as "creating lasting impressions in ephemeral spaces" (Bandarchian et al., in press), recognizing the need for reaching local audiences.² Part of me wanted to object to the ways in which the serious arts critics invited to *Curatorial Dreams* were somewhat tentative and almost apologetic for stepping out of what could be seen as a hierarchy of sorts. And of course, in one sense, they were right to do this. As the editors highlight, the world of art practice can be specialized along disciplinary lines, even if there are blurrings.

In some ways, however, what Butler and Lehrer (2016) do, especially in inviting the "dreaming" and imagination, has been taken on artfully by activist/artists such as Jo

Spence, Rosy Martin, and Rafael Goldchain. The staging and reenactments of Jo Spence and Rosy Martin as highlighted in Spence's (1995) book *Cultural Sniping* are legendary; something that Sandra Weber and I wrote about in 1999 in *Reinventing Ourselves as Teachers*. Spence and Martin playfully engage with reenactments and stagings to, in a sense, "reconfigure" the family album. I love the playfulness of a 1986 business card: "Jo Spence, Photographer: Available for divorces, funerals, illness, social injustice, scenes of domestic violence, exploration of sexuality and any joyful events" (Spence, 1995).³ But the work of Rafael Goldchain (2008)—and his fascinating book *I Am My Family*—adds in new levels of dreaming and imagination. Faced with the absence of family photographs, but rich family stories nonetheless, Goldchain reenacts an entire family through make-up and costuming, personally enacting all of the characters in the album. He is his family. But what drew me to his work is its relevance to image and verbal text and its careful attention to the detail of working with the characters, fieldnotes, scans of official documents, sketchbooks, and the like that we see in the last section of the book. Thus, while the book is primarily made up of staged images and reenactments, it includes writing and sketching as part of enacting a type of curatorial dreaming and curatorial propositions. For me, Goldchain's book felt like an invitation to engage anew with family and family photographs.

Doing Travelling Fieldwork

Part 1: Behind the Scenes

In the winter of 2024, my three daughters and I planned a visit to the U.K. as part of a project that we affectionately refer to as one of "recolonization". In seriousness, we are committed to the project of deepening an understanding of colonization. We are Settlers, bringing with us a very uncomfortable positioning in Canada. Echoing Emma Lowman and Adam Barker's (2015) statement in *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada*, "We say Settler because it is who we are. We say Settler because it is not everything we could be" (p. 123). My paternal grandparents left Bideford in Devon in 1910, ending up in the middle of Canada on the prairies. My paternal grandfather, abandoning a life as a shipwright in the British navy (its own form of territoriality), becomes a dairy farmer, settling on land of the Dakota peoples in Treaty 1. My maternal grandparents left York in 1911–1912 and also headed off to the prairies. My maternal grandfather worked as a section foreman on the Canadian Pacific Railway which, in and of itself, is emblematic of territory and settling, of pushing back the frontiers of "from sea to sea" Canada.

Another part of Settler colonialism is the colonial archive which includes 150 or so black and white photos—mostly snapshots—of an era of 1910-photos in the 1950s

that are clearly from the Old Country, and that would have been sent to my grandparents and their families by those still in York and Bideford. The collection that we have is somewhat random, made up of the photos that would have ended up in mother's "archive"; perhaps remnants of the photo collections of deceased relatives. Some, we could tell, had been once glued into albums but, in our collection, they were simply just in boxes. The four of us spent several months during the winter of 2024 studying the photos, trying to figure out who people actually were from rather vague captions: "This tree is at the bottom of our garden". We started with what Annette Kuhn (2002) would term a visual layout, spreading out the photos so we could walk around and try to cluster them, starting very simply at the beginning of separating the York photos from the Devon photos. Thanks to my late mother's attempts at anticipating that someday her children and grandchildren might want to do something with these photos, many were inventoried as the Skinner-Salt side of the family (Devon) or the Brown-Pitt side of the family (York); something that was particularly helpful since so many people from both sides of the family, and in the same era, had the same first name—an archive of Brendas and Walters and Williams.

Figure 1

The Visual Layout (Author Credit)



The work with the photos took me back to earlier work I had done with family photo albums (see Mitchell & Allnutt, 2008) and a lovely body of literature on albums. When I went back to Martha Langford's (2000) work, I was now struck by her attention to curiosity; something that I had already started to think about in relation to what I ended up calling "the ethics of curiosity" for a recent conference paper.⁴ As Langford writes:

Each of us values our own photographs and rightfully sees them as unique, even as we stumble on their doubles in the collections of friends and strangers. *Curiouser and curiouser*, recognizing ourselves in others seems somehow to

increase the significance of our photographic trove, its predictability compensated by our greater sense of belonging and stability. This mixture of feelings, and a rush of others, is excited by personal photographs and concentrated [often] in the presence of a photographic album. (2000, p. 3)

Indeed, Langford's "curiouser and curiouser" took us, like Rafael Goldchain (2008), in search of more: birth certificates, marriage and death certifications, and various census data from church registries and other sources. Thanks to Ancestry.com and the U.K.'s sophisticated documentation, we started accumulating data on baptisms and marriages, including names of churches and some addresses of domiciles: "this is where so-and-so actually lived", this is where a grandparent was christened or married.

Part 2: Travelling Images

Our actual travel took place in June 2024, heading first to Bideford and other places in Devon, and then later to York. We travelled with our digital archive made up of snapshots and captions, and the many official registry documents. When we started, our mission, if we could name it, was never in search of tracking down living relatives, but more one of place—addressing the ever-present question "where do we come from?" Given that we were working primarily with a photo archive, we of course responded through the visual.

One set of photos we took were of the "playful genre" type, based on the dozens of family holiday "by the sea" photos of the 1950s. These included what now look like glamorous poses that are no longer a convention, but which characterized many seaside and landscape shots.

Figure 2

Dolly Poses; left: Rebecca, Dorian, and Sarah; upper and lower right: Dolly Mountain



A second set of photos of places included somewhat public places such as churches where grandparents were christened or married. Most were from the late 19th century, but one church visit was based on a christening from 1634. In this same category, we included visits to the addresses of homes we were able to track down. We referred to these as “from the sidewalk” photos. These were all in urban settings in Bideford or York. In some ways it is hard to do much more than think “so-and-so once slept here 110 years ago”, but visiting and photographing the places did lead to some encounters with people from neighbouring places who stopped to talk and, perhaps more seriously, the ethics of taking photographs, even from the sidewalk, of people’s private homes. Our picture-taking did not really fall into the category of street photography, and in an era of heightened surveillance, is a reminder of transgressing the private and public. At the same time, it is hard to ignore a sense of entitlement or neo-colonization, somehow, based on the knowledge that a great-grandparent once lived here.

Although I indicated in the previous section that we regarded our main purpose as one of engaging with place, when we got to York, we embarked upon a different type of Langford’s (2000) “curiouser and curiouser” by engaging with a set of snapshots of my great-grandmother, Granny Brown (or Elizabeth Jane), and mirroring more explicitly the reenactment work of Jo Spence, Rosy Martin, and Rafael Goldchain. It seems worthy of its own section, and so I refer to it as “One Day on Lawrence Street, York, 1939 and 2024”.

Part 3: One Day on Lawrence Street, York, 1939 and 2024

Between census data and the visual evidence of a couple of photographs that include the actual name of her building carved in stone, we are able to find the exact location of a series of photographs involving my great-grandmother taken sometime in 1939. They are an intriguing set of pictures: a couple of Elizabeth Jane by herself, posed in the doorway of her apartment; several where she is posed with other relatives; and a couple that include children we think are her grandchildren—little Walter who is nine (according to the caption), and little Brenda who is five. I think we are attracted to these photos because they have some relationship to each other, in a collection that otherwise seems so random. There is something so compelling about the sternness of the adults—which I recognize is its own photo convention of the era—but there is something amusing about the children, Walter and Brenda, in their playful scowls, refusing to comply with convention but still not smiling.

But the series becomes even more dramatic, and I guess we could say disturbing, as we dig further. Checking online before we leave for York, we are able to ascertain that the place, a series of terraced apartments built as an almshouse project

in 1894, is still there and rented out as accessible housing. Like Rafael Goldchain (2008), we also worked with census data and registries and discovered that Elizabeth Jane/Granny Brown, born in 1856, had actually died in a fire at her residence in 1944. The cause of death is stated as “asphyxiation due to a fire”. Working with several of the photos, we engaged in our own version of reenactments with a heightened sense of solemnity. We each got to pose as Granny Brown and act as photographers, trying to capture both the subject and gaze of the photographer. In the photos below you can see us engaging in a reenactment process, with each of us having a turn at playing the stern Granny Brown standing in her doorway, and then another set on a church bench on the church grounds right beside her place and with several relatives. Two of my daughters, Sarah and Dorian, also take a turn at reenacting the young Walter and Brenda scowling.

Figure 3

Process Photos (Dorian Mitchell). Left: Photo Subject, Rebecca; Photographers, Sarah and Claudia. Right: Photo Subject, Rebecca; Photographer, Claudia.

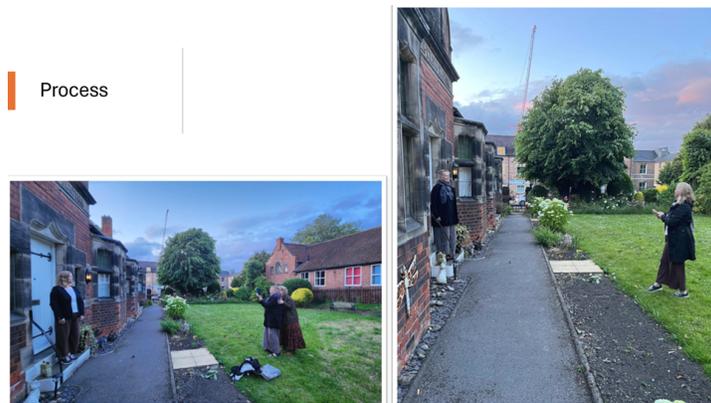


Figure 4

Granny Brown in Black and White Photo in the Middle. Reenactments: Dorian on the Left; Claudia, Upper Right; Sarah, Lower Right.



Figure 5

Lower Left: Scowling Children, Sarah Mitchell, Dorian Mitchell; Right: Walter and Brenda, Scowling Children (Author Credit)



Figure 6

Left: Church Bench with Two Unknown Relatives, Elizabeth Jane in the Middle, Brenda and Walter on the Grass; Right: Reenactment, Sarah, Dorian, Rebecca



What was it like to do the reenactments? I often pose this question to participants who do staging of photos in photovoice and cellphilmimg projects. We are dipping into our own history and, although Goldchain (2008) and Spence (1995) deal with family photographs, there is not a great deal written about affect. Elizabeth Jane, according to her death certificate, died about five years after these photos were taken. Clearly the fire did not destroy the place, but it did take her. I cannot fully account for all of our obsessions, but of course it was impossible to ignore her tragic death as we engaged in the reenactments and the fact that we didn't actually know this about her. Did my mother know that her grandmother died in a fire? My grandmother (Elizabeth Jane's daughter) must have known, so is there any likelihood that my mother didn't know? Thinking of Annette Kuhn's (2002) work on photo captions in *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*, there are questions about what is written and what is not. When do we pass on tragedy? Although we know that all the various search engines like Ancestry.com reveal many surprises in people's family histories, we had somehow not expected this. My mother was a great one for adding details to captions such as "This is Granny Brown", and might add in what she thought was a relevant date or a place. But there is no added caption to "Granny Brown: died in a fire in 1944".

Around the same time that we visit York, we also have a chance to read Kate Atkinson's (1995/2020) family history novel *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*, set in York mostly between the early 1900s and the early 1950s (but extends into the early 1990s). There is a scene early on in the novel that captures so poignantly the reenactment scenes of Granny Brown and our knowledge of the circumstances of the fire. Ruby Lennox, the protagonist born in 1952, sees a photograph of who she is told by her mother, Bunty, is her great-grandmother. It doesn't at all look like a previous photograph she had seen, and she is told that actually the photograph she remembers seeing, "Lowther Street, 1914", is really a photograph of what would have been the stepmother to Bunty's mother, Nell, and her many siblings. It seems that her real great-grandmother, Alice, died in childbirth.

My newly discovered great-grandmother, it appears, died giving birth to Nell shortly after which my feckless great-grandfather married Rachel (the unreal mother, the false bride from "Lowther Street, 1914"). Bunty had a vague handed-down memory that Rachel came to look after the children, and act as a poorly paid housekeeper. "Six children and without a mother," she explained in her death-of-Bambi's-mother voice. "He had to marry someone."

"Why didn't you ever tell me this before?"

"I forgot", said Bunty defiantly.

Ruby looks at the back of the photo and sees that it was taken by J.P. Armand, Travelling Photographer, on the 20th of June, 1888.

"You would never have noticed, would you? The way she's standing behind the couch hides it."

“What? Notice what? Hides what?”

“My mother was born in 1888. On July the thirtieth. Alice is eight months pregnant in this photograph. With my mother, Nell.”

Does that account for that impenetrable gaze? Can she feel her own death coming, sniffing around her sepia skirts, stroking her sepia hair? Bunty was still inspecting the photograph. “She looks just like you,” she said, her tone accusing, as if the lost Alice and I were fellow members of a conspiracy, intent on stirring up trouble.

I want to rescue this lost woman from what’s going to happen to her (time). Dive into the picture, pluck her out. (Atkinson, 1995/2020, pp. 28–29)

Even though there was a certain merriment in travelling to the exact place and being able to reenact a real person, there is a type of self-consciousness in playing my very stern and unknown great-grandmother who would perish in a fire a few years later in that very place. Seizing on Atkinson’s (1995/2020) “Dive into the picture, pluck her out” (p. 29), I think that is now what we were trying to do in some way that day on Lawrence Street more than 80 years later.

Curatorial Propositions for Travelling Images

One Day on Lawrence Street, York

All of the examples in Butler and Lehrer’s (2016) *Curatorial Dreams* touch on public issues, covering a range of concerns: racism in public art, reimagining a children’s hospital in South Africa, and so on. But I wonder what it would be like to curate an exhibition on travelling images based on *One Day on Lawrence Street, York* as its own exhibition, made up of the original 1939 photos and captions, the composites superimposing original photos and the 2024 reenactment photos (including captions for the reenactment photos), the process photos, and of course historical documents (birth certificates, death certificates, newspaper accounts of the fire). But is there more urgency to connoting the fire? Elizabeth Jane, in and of herself, is fierce-looking. Do her photos need to be larger than life? How does the viewer not simply look at this as an amusing set of playful photos? Could the display include textual pieces such as the Kate Atkinson (1995/2020) extensive quote and maybe others from *Behind the Scenes of the Museum*, especially if the exhibition is in York? A key question: Where is this exhibition? Located as part of Langford’s (2000) “curiouser and curiouser”, and the “ethics of curiosity” I alluded to earlier, there are many more questions. There is a church, church hall, and grounds right beside Elizabeth Jane’s place. Maybe there could be a photo installation right there. Could it travel from a site or a gallery space in York to the local gallery in the former Canadian National Railway train station in Virden,

Manitoba (and the town where many of the Lawrence Street photos travelled to in the first place?). If I were to do that, I would want to include some images of nearby street signs and places such as Lower Ebor Street, one of the many place names replicated in the New Country. Maybe this calls for a series of workshops. I am envisioning one on reenactments attached to the family reenactment idea in the exhibition, but maybe another on working with contemporary digital albums. Can the curatorial statement pick up on some of the ethical dimensions of this kind of work ranging from the ethics of captioning (and recaptioning), the ethics of reenactments, and maybe broader questions about what it means to situate a recolonizing, however playful the project was, and part of the serious project of decolonization. This is clearly something that settlers in Canada are grappling with and, although we have perhaps named this as something in far more explicit ways than has currently been done in the U.K., there is a long way to go.

Lawrence Street and Beyond

But could these questions go broader and deeper? I did warn the reader at the beginning that it might be hard to contain the ideas of travelling images. I could imagine curating an exhibition that includes the ethical issues of the Lawrence Street exhibition alongside the ethical encounters sparked by two recent community-based exhibitions through the Participatory Cultures Lab at McGill University. So, if we think of *One Day On Lawrence Street, York* as the part one of an exhibition, we might think of adding two more parts. Part two, *Youth United Will Never Be Defeated*, is based on photos and captions produced by youth from Tanzania, Mali, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mexico, and Indigenous youth in Canada.⁵ Organized around the prompt “gender in my community”, the photos and captions were produced by more than 200 youth in these countries. The youth attending a Transnational Summit and mostly representing the various countries listed above selected 30 to 35 photos for a travelling exhibition, and created a title for the exhibition (*Youth United Will Never Be Defeated*) and a curatorial statement. The resulting exhibition is travelling back to each of their countries, but in the full recognition of the question of how gender travels. The project questions what it means for images, especially images on disrupting gender norms, to travel. Inspired by the travels of well-known public exhibitions such as Edward Steichen’s *The Family of Man* and Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party*, the project offers a new “take” on how participant-led exhibitions can also travel. Already one of the project sites in Mexico has begun to interact with the photos through political embroidery. Each participant at the site has chosen one photo to work with, embroidering a speaking back message.

A third set of images, *Honouring and Experiencing the Art of War-Affected Children*, is made up of 25 to 30 drawings and masks produced by war-affected children and children living in conflict in Uganda, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and South Africa. The stakes were high as my colleagues and I have explored in what we describe as “in the

box” and “out of the box” ethical dilemmas about what to do with the hundreds of drawings we have gathered over the last two decades. As we queried,

What does it mean to view drawings produced by children in a conflict zone, thousands of kilometres away? As powerful as children’s artwork can be, it is not always clear how best to use the art, once produced. Should it be exhibited? If so, to whom? If not, why not? What does it mean to have collections of drawings in a box or digitized and stored on a hard drive and only the researcher has access to them? What ethical challenges are there in having the art and showing it or not showing it? (Bandarchian et al., in press)

What if no one sees the drawings? The drawings produced by children and young people across a series of arts-based projects form a corpus of artwork as part of the Global Child project.⁶ The idea for the exhibition was to set up an invitational event involving a display of the drawings and a workshop so that adult viewers could engage with the drawings, even though they were from somewhere else, from someone else’s conflict, or from some other time period.

An Exhibition of Exhibitions?

Together these three sets of images, while rich in themselves, could become a composite exhibition on how and where images travel, what the ethical issues are, and ideas about workshops and other interventions as part of the engagement process. It could build in the work of Harding (2018) and others on feminist readings of travel. Now I feel like I am in Butler and Lehrer’s (2016) *Curatorial Dreaming*. Physically, what would this exhibition of exhibitions look like? In a gallery with three clearly marked spaces, audiences might move from one to the other, but are there ways to connote time and geographic travel? What would it take to connect the three sets of images? All three are in some way dealing with performing and embodiment. All three imply geographic movement and some sense of challenging an over there and over here. The photo images and reenactments of *Lawrence Street* are situated within an over there and over here in perhaps slightly explicit ways in comparison to *Honouring* and *Youth United*; however, all three clearly take up ethical constraints. Audience is also a consideration. Who should see such disparate images? Perhaps this is too much for a general audience and best suited to a group of academics seeking to deepen an understanding of travel through images? Or maybe it is a training session for ethics boards on visual research? These may be spinning out-of-control questions and propositions, but they do invite ways to think across travel. Regardless, the idea of a workshop intervention (see also: Kendrick et al., 2021, 2022) seems particularly appropriate.

Conclusion

There has never been a better time to crash through some of the disciplinary boundaries related to curating exhibitions and questions about who can exhibit what, where, and to which audiences. Butler and Lehrer rightly acknowledged huge gaps between curators and art critics in their 2016 publication. While I don't think those boundaries are gone, I do think there are ways to challenge them. Not long ago when my colleagues and I were planning exhibition ideas for *Honouring and Experiencing the Art of War-Affected Children*, we consulted with several curators, one of whom more or less advised us that we were out of our league and to step away from this project which sounded to her as unethical (shouldn't we be going back to the artists to get their consent even though we assured her that our university Research Ethics Boards had already confirmed that the assent and consent protocols were sufficient), and unfeasible (shouldn't we be bringing the young artists to Montréal, a point that made no acknowledgement of the danger both to the artists and the researchers). Fortunately, we weren't daunted, but her less than positive response helped us "step up" instead to what we do know a lot about which is facilitating workshops, and once we rethought the event as an educational encounter based on display and workshop and not a standalone exhibition, we were more than satisfied with the results of getting those drawings "out of their boxes". At a recent art history conference there were numerous papers about community photography, artists working in prisons, and the community co-design of projects, all of which call for much broader collaborations. Curatorial practice cuts across all work that seeks public engagement.

At the same time, curatorial interventions, regardless of whether they take place in an official gallery or museum, or at a petrol station or community hall, are meant to not only provoke discussion, but frame the discussion within pedagogical frameworks. A rich example of this is described in Ellen C. Caldwell, Cynthia S. Colburn, and Ella J. Gonzalez's (2024) volume, *Gender Violence, Art, and the Viewer*, where it is clear that curations of canonical art alongside emerging work from Indigenous artists invite the idea of interventions rather than simply relying on conventional curation. As the editors observe:

A visitor to the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) rushes to see Pablo Picasso's famed monumental painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)*, only to find a nearly naked person, adorned with black asterisks drawn on their body and covering their nipples, standing with arms outstretched, as if a Vitruvian asterisk themselves, in front of the painting. Performance artist Emma Sulkowicz stands there briefly for photos, knowing that MoMA staff will not tolerate this interruption for long, and in this fleeting action, Sulkowicz visually asks both the museum and its visitors what it would take for curators to consider the small act

of adding an asterisk to wall labels, providing more information about artists who are well-documented abusers or misogynists. (Caldwell et al., 2024, p. 1)

This moves us towards the types of concerns that have been so central to arts-based methods and that have long-engaged researchers and practitioners in studying how ideas travel across generations, across time, across geographies, and across embodied spaces. Across all there is the idea of whether audiences learn to look or look away. The concept of *travelling* offers opportunities to challenge normative, colonial, and hegemonic ideas, valuing movement (and the idea of social movements), resistance, diversity/plurality, and maybe even advancing social change.

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ENDNOTES

1. Much of the above exhibiting and screening is covered in the chapters “Pictures at an Exhibition” and “The Pedagogy of Screenings” in *Participatory Visual Methodologies: Social Change, Community and Policy* (Mitchell et al., 2017), as well as in the article “Looking at Showing: On the Politics and Pedagogy of Exhibiting in Community-based Research and Work with Policy Makers” (Mitchell, 2015).
2. Gallery Transforming, an initiative of the Participatory Cultures Lab at McGill University, regularly carries out, documents, and studies low-cost approaches to exhibitions, alongside the potential of WhatsApp and other platforms for digital exhibitions: “Gallery Transform: *Ephemeral Spaces/Lasting Impressions* embraces the idea of the pop-up and the ephemeral in support of low-cost community exhibitions and screenings”. See here: https://www.mcgill.ca/participatory-cultures-lab/files/participatory-cultures-lab/pcl_description_and_mandate.pdf
3. See here: <https://dismantlingculture.blogspot.com/2010/06/business-cards.html>
4. I presented “The Ethics of Curiosity Through Reading and Performing the Archive” at the 51st Annual Conference of the Association of Art History, York, U.K. as part of a panel, “Images Through Words: On the Ethics of ‘Reading’”.
5. The travelling exhibition *Youth United Will Never Be Defeated* is part of a SSHRC Partnership Grant “Transform: Engaging with Youth for Social Change (2024–2030)”. Project Number: 895-2024-1003
6. Global Child McGill is a FRQSC research initiative involving a team of 15 researchers in social work, education, psychiatry, and psychology from McGill, Concordia, and the University of Montréal.