

EARLY CHILDHOOD AT PLAY IN THE ART MUSEUM

By

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A CAPSTONE PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS OF
THE
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Thanks to my husband and daughter for their constant support and to the professors who guided this project. Thanks also to my grandma who taught me that we should never be done learning.

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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
THE TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT
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By

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Abstract

Early Childhood at Play in the Art Museum used research on the use of play in art museum programs for early childhood and preschool visitors to create a guide for parents/caregivers/educators to use while visiting art museums with young children. The research was grounded in an exploration of current approaches to working with young children in museums through research in professional literature and on museum websites. Of particular interest were the types of play allowed or encouraged through programming in the art museum setting. The literature research influenced the creation of a parent/caregiver survey looking at specific issues and needs for adults visiting art museums with young children. The research and survey, together, pointed out a gap in programming for this age group leaving untrained adults to guide art museum experiences for young children. The museum guide is intended to encourage families with young children to play together in art museums by providing information on age

appropriate ways for them to interact with works of art in the museum setting.

View the printable guide and website at www.playintheartmuseum.weebly.com

and on Issuu.com.

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Introduction

Kids today are museum savvy. They have been welcomed with open arms into science and children's museums that cater to them with hands-on exhibits and lots of space to interact with materials, run, and make noise. However, most art museums still pose a challenge. The large, quiet rooms can be intimidating and the strict *no touch* rule is extremely hard to follow. Add to this the traditional lack of programming for early childhood and preschool age groups and the art museum can seem off limits to many parents and caregivers who wish to expose their children to art.

I was inspired to create this Capstone Project through my work at the Portland Children's Museum's Paint and Play classes. These classes are influenced by the Reggio Emilia philosophies and include children 18 months to 3 years old and their caregivers. When I started at the museum, the class was messy and noisy and the children were encouraged to experiment and move materials around the room creating works of art of their own inspiration. The result was an exciting space where caregivers and children felt relaxed and open to trying new things. A change in staff resulted in the class being organized more like a traditional classroom with craft projects focused on product rather than process. Gone were the excitement, the mess, and the sense of experimentation. I realized that play was the missing ingredient. As I thought about it, I began to realize that play would work in other formats for teaching early childhood and

preschool students about art. Play would make a great connection between traditional art museums and a child's everyday life.

Play brings engagement and excitement to the learning environment, providing a foundation for activities like exploration and experimentation — activities that are at the heart of any museum visit. It is a process that comes naturally to children and is the method by which they explore and develop an understanding of their world. The open-ended aspect of play allows for creative thinking and exploration because there is no fear of failure. Children know there are no wrong answers in play. This makes it a natural learning tool for art investigation and art making in art museum settings.

Parents, educators, and caregivers who understand the benefits of bringing play into their interactions in the art museum setting can make use of this learning process. Children are learning to investigate a work of art and think about how it makes them feel as they play with it looking for types of food or finding items in a treasure hunt. They are exploring what art is and where it comes from (Chang, 2012) as they imitate poses in a painting or create sculptures inspired by what they saw at the museum. During artistic play, students learn what a particular medium feels like, what it can and can't do, and what inspires them about it (Rasmussen, 2010). Creativity and experimentation are at their best during these times when there are no wrong answers and children develop a sense that it is acceptable to take chances and try new things (Gude, 2010).

For this study, I researched and analyzed current literature on play in museums and art education. In addition, I studied websites from art museums around the country to learn about their programming for young children and families. I sought to understand how play is currently used in art museums and the perceived benefits and issues with its use. The information gathered led me to acquire a better understanding of methods for effectively engaging students in playful activities in the creation and investigation of works of art. As a final outcome of this project, I developed a learning guide for parents, caregivers, or educators to use during art museum visits with their early childhood and preschool visitors. The guide included information on engaging young children in meaningful playful interactions with works of art and creating their own work.

Statement of Problem

The loss of playtime in children's lives affects them creatively, socially, and academically. Although many parents and educators are beginning to recognize that over-programming children's free time and teaching to tests is ineffective in educating students and preparing them for the future, there is still a push for standardization and movement away from free-play time (Robinson, 2010). Play needs to be revisited as an opportunity to bring creativity back into the lives of children instead of its current position as the opposite of work (Sergeant Richardson, 2012). Children have the time and freedom to think and act independently and make connections to their world through play (Elkind, 2008) the result is child-led learning that is engaging, exciting, and filled with

lasting impressions (Fawcett & Hay, 2004). The creativity and freedom that come from play make it an excellent tool for exploring art-making and art appreciation in a museum setting (Krakowski, 2012).

Art museums traditionally lack programming for children younger than school age. This leaves untrained parents/caregivers/educators the responsibility of introducing young children to art and the art museum (Bowers, 2012). At best, it is intimidating and many museums further the alienation by creating environments that are not family friendly. My research aimed to discover how play is currently used in art museum programs and activities for early childhood and preschool children and how play could be used more effectively to create meaningful and engaging experiences in the art museum. These issues led me to the development of a guide for parents/caregivers to use in creating their own experiences at the art museum with their child.

Research Questions

This research project was guided by questions regarding the use of play in the museum programs for preschool and early childhood visitors and how to use it to develop quality programs.

How is play currently used in art museums and early childhood art education to engage young children, their teachers, and caregivers?

How can play be used to create an engaging art museum experience for early childhood and preschool age visitors?

Significance of the Study

Many museums do not provide programs for early childhood and preschool children. Though the reasons range from lack of staff to questioning whether this age group belongs in the museum (Bowers, 2012), the result is the same. Parents and caregivers are given the responsibility of introducing these young children to art and art museums without the benefit of education and/or training in art. This study was needed to gain a better understanding of the museum programs available for this age group as well as the most effective methods of engaging children in play for learning.

Looking at the use of play through other curriculums shows that there are clear benefits to the child and the learning environment (Fawcett & Hay, 2004; Walker, 2003). Play helps children gain academic, social, and creative skills not supported by other styles of learning (Elkind, 2008). Individually, young children can find ways to express themselves and find meaning (Pitri, 2001). In groups, they develop skills in collaborating and sharing of knowledge (Milbrandt, Felts, Richards & Abghari, 2004). Developing an understanding of play as it is used in art education and the benefits it brings to learning led to the information needed to create a useful and encouraging guide for parents and caregivers. The guide helps adults engage children in meaningful and memorable art appreciation and art making activities in the art museum.

A parent survey was conducted to look at concerns parents have with taking children to the art museum and information they feel would be helpful and

encourage more visits. The survey showed that parents and caregivers feel they lack the information and resources needed to introduce their child to the art museum. Without this information, parents/caregivers often avoided the art museum feeling it would be a struggle to manage behavior and that the child was too young to experience art in this way. This project is significant because it brings together the engagement and experimentation of play with the discovery and creativity of art to provide parents/caregivers with a guide to exploring art alongside their child.

Literature Review

My literature research for *Early Childhood at Play in the Art Museum* focused on developing appropriate content for the parent/caregiver guide. For this literature review, I looked for theoretical approaches to working with young museum visitors and their caregivers, information on programs currently available for this age group, as well as what programming was missing. Detailed descriptions of successful programs as well as challenges faced in providing programs for young children were equally valuable. Websites of art museums throughout the United States were also reviewed to gain an understanding of current programming. The literature showed that play activities of all kinds lead to learning and creativity through spontaneity and openness, even when guided by adults. This makes play an excellent tool for connecting art to children's lives outside the museum, resulting in lasting memories and exciting learning environments.

Playful Learning

Research shows that kids learn while they play. “Children play to make sense of their world and everything in it” (Krakowski, 2012, p. 49). Everything from walking to making friends is learned through the open-ended, spontaneous focus that comes with the freedom to play. This process begins in infancy as babies explore their world and continues through childhood as children develop social, physical, and intellectual skills that can only be found through play (Elkind, 2008). When free-play is part of a child’s everyday experiences, they are comfortable experimenting and exploring new ideas and skills without fear of making mistakes. As a result, young children try on new roles, ideas, and behaviors during play and create scaffolding to build and organize their learning, moving to increasingly more complex levels (Zollinger & Attencio, 2007). Children’s play generally involves their whole bodies and all of their senses, making the learning that happens most memorable (Bruehl, 2011).

The Reggio Emilia approach to education provides an excellent example of the benefits of combining play, art, and education (Greibling, 2011). Reggio Emilia programs bring art into all areas of education through the use of play and maintain a full-time artist on staff known as the atelerista (Bowley, 2007). The atelerista works with a wide range of materials and learning styles to provide each child with the opportunity to share their voice through art (Fawcett & Hay, 2004). The combination of art with open-ended, child-led play empowers children to take on any role they are interested in, from artist to inventor. They learn that

they can ask questions of the world around them (Fawcett & Hay, 2004). Those who support Reggio Emilia feel that the element of play encourages children to take risks and innovate, preparing them to lead in the future (Bowley, 2007).

Play and Creativity

Creative play gives young children the chance to explore and experiment with their environment and materials — a stick changes from a cane to a fairy wand or a ball of clay becomes a pancake to serve at a feast. This type of play is a key exercise for the creative mind and develops such skills as imagination, fantasy, and curiosity (Elkind, 2008).

Creating and interacting with art provides opportunities for creative play, giving children the time and guidance needed to develop important thinking and seeing skills such as openness to experimentation, reflection, persistence, and visual-spatial thinking (Winner & Hetland, 2008). Ishikawa stated, “making art is equivalent to appreciating art, as both actions are creative.” (Ishikawa, 2012, p. 88) showing that both experiences are important in developing creativity in children. As children play with art materials they learn to take risks, experiment, and adjust their thinking (Cabaniss, 2005; Pitri, 2001). Victor D’Amico (as cited in Rasmussen, 2010) felt that allowing students to play with materials and processes first gave them the opportunity to find inspiration from their environment while learning to think and see as an artist. Without these skills, we are losing artists and innovators of the future.

Playing with Art

Learning to look at and think about art is accessible to children at a much younger age than most adults think. “Long before young children can speak, their responses to shapes, colors, and other stimuli around them helps to form their indigenous styles of interacting with their world” (Danko-McGhee, 2006, p. 21). With guidance, adults can use this interest and natural response to introduce young children to art concepts, ideas, and activities.

Young children can take the lead in art museums, sharing thoughts and feelings about what they see and guiding adults to new knowledge along the way (Weier, 2004). Early childhood and preschool children happily engage in exploring works of art through activities like games and storytelling (Yenawine, 2003). These activities build on their interest in art by connecting it to meaningful experiences in their everyday lives. George Szekely set the foundations for the importance of play in art and points out that playfulness helps both adults and children tap into their creativity to find new ideas (Szekely, 1983). While children don't need facts to learn about art, they do need opportunities to engage art through their own interests (Chang, 2012) at their cognitive level, and to discuss their thoughts and feelings with involved adults (Danko-McGhee, 2006). This open-ended exploration and play with art ideas leads to the discovery of new ways of looking and thinking.

Playful learning translates to learning to make, look at, and think about art through the interactive, hands-on activities in which young children learn best.

Play allows children to work out abstract ideas through concrete objects (Szekeley, 1983). These activities invite children to play with ideas and materials (Danko-McGhee, 2006) and enhance learning about art by providing a goal for the child and giving the child an active role in their own learning (Chang, 2012). These don't need to be traditional, quiet museum activities; instead they can involve interacting with art through activities like movement, role-play, laughter, and the sharing of ideas.

Play in the Museum

Museums bring out a sense of adventure, exploration, and experimentation in many visitors. These same feelings are present in free, unstructured play. This connection makes museums a potentially powerful venue for the playful learning that is central to childhood (Zollinger & Attencio, 2007). Museums provide inspiration and give visitors of all ages opportunities to develop their own meanings and knowledge through connections with real and unique objects (Bowers, 2012). Seeing a work of art firsthand provides engagement and inspiration not often found outside the museum.

Learning in museums is influenced by social and physical contexts in addition to the motivation and interests of the child (Falk & Dierking, 2000). The use of play as a way to interact with objects in the museum provides for activities that are motivating, speak to children's interests, allow for social interaction, and create a connection with the physical environment resulting in a learning experience that is engaging and exciting. The social atmosphere of play is one

that young children find important (Chang, 2012). In this context, children can learn from each other and begin to accept other's points of view.

A child's play *outside* of the museum can provide a framework for his or her learning *inside* the museum. Using a child's play themes and interests as a guide for museum learning activities can lead to engagement and excitement as well as connections to the child's world (Krakowski, 2012). A favorite color can become the basis for the visit or a treasure hunt can be held inside the museum. These activities encourage engagement and interaction with individual works of art. The challenge, for adults, is to create interactions that remain true to the content of the museum (Adams, Moreno, Polk, & Buck, 2003). The goal is to provide interactions that are playful and engaging but not at the expense of learning about the works of art.

A review of museum websites (see Appendix A) shows a lack of early childhood programming involving looking and thinking about art and few art making activities involving play – missing a connection between known and unknown for museum visitors. Many museums, like the Dallas Museum of Art, relegate family learning to separate rooms or special days once a month. While these spaces and activities allow for touching and hands-on interaction, many lack content relevant for younger children. A few museums, like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, do have activities that include early childhood and preschool ages. The Met provides a "Start with Art" class for 3 to 7 year olds and an adult. Museum educators lead activities including sketching in the galleries, listening to

stories, and creating a unique work of art. This type of programming allows young children the opportunity to connect firsthand with works of art, develop comfort in the museum setting, and begin to look and think like an artist.

Freeing Play

Play has changed from a child-led and invented activity to one that is managed by adults (Sergeant Richardson, 2012). Many early childhood programs follow a structured curriculum rather than allowing time for playing on the playground. As parents and educators, adults play a critical role in creating time for and encouraging open-ended free-play in children (Zollinger & Attencio, 2007).

Willingness to play is influenced by a sense of freedom that comes from children feeling that the environment is safe and open to experimentation (Cabaniss, 2005), the rules are adaptable as the game changes, tools have many uses, and they have the skills and powers to influence these other elements (Sergeant Richardson, 2012). To be effective, guided play must retain the spontaneity and openness of free-play while aiming children toward educational goals (Krakowski, 2012). Adults have the challenge of creating environments that encourage these feelings of freedom, then standing back to let the children guide the learning that happens.

Play is a powerful and motivating force in the life of a child. A review of the current literature shows that the open-ended creative thinking that comes with playing leads to learning and skill development. As a result, play proves to be an

excellent method for learning about and creating art because experimenting and exploring are encouraged, leading to a sense of empowerment and engagement in young children. Museums provide a place where play and art come together through games and activities, extending learning and the development of meaning through connections to a child's world and interest level. Adults encourage engagement in play by creating physical and psychological environments that feel safe for the free-thinking experimentation that comes with playfulness. The result is an experience that is as memorable as it is meaningful for all involved.

Methodology

The study of play in art museum programming for early childhood and preschool children was influenced by my work at the Portland Children's Museum. The museum was founded on the philosophies of Reggio Emilia. Programs throughout the museum allowed for learning through exploration, experimentation, and play. It is a noisy, exciting place full of kids of varying ages interacting with each other and with their parents, grandparents, or other caregivers.

These philosophies once carried over to the art classrooms in the museum. Classes for early childhood visitors and their caregivers focused on exploring materials and experimenting with making art. More recent leadership has led to a decrease in freedom in this space which caused me to question what had changed, what was missing, and how we might get back to where we

were. The excitement and engagement students once felt in our studio also inspired me to think about how art museums approach working with early childhood visitors. Clearly the totally immersive, hands-on environment doesn't work in a traditional museum setting. But, I believe, play can be used as a method for introducing this age group to a more traditional setting while giving them the opportunity to explore and experiment with learning to look at art and make their own.

My research into Early Childhood at Play in the Art Museum consisted of literature research, website reviews, and a parent/caregiver survey. The literature review focused on current literature, most written in the last ten years, regarding the work being done with young children in museum settings. I also investigated the use of play, its influences on learning, and its uses in educational settings. Methods and uses of play in the art museum were gained through the review of museum websites. I reviewed 15 art museum websites from across the country for information on programming and activities available to children under five years of age and their adult companions. This information provided the basis for the survey and parent guide that uses play as the foundation for activities in my local art museum.

Parents, grandparents, and other caregivers participating in the Paint and Play toddler classes at the Portland Children's Museum received the survey (see Appendix B) during class time. The survey included questions regarding experience with art museums, successes and challenges, as well as information

adults would find helpful when visiting art museums with their young children. The questions for the survey were based on information gained through the literature review regarding activities and information found to engage early childhood visitors and improve parent/caregiver confidence during museum visits. If they chose to participate, participants were asked to place the completed surveys in a closed box to maintain their anonymity. I distributed 20 surveys and received 13 in return. This group provided a sample of the wide range of ages and relationships of adults who attend art museums with children. Responses from the survey informed decisions about information included in the museum guide and resulted in a change in focus for my project from focusing on how to use play in the museum to including information on how to prepare for and manage a visit with a young child.

The IRB02 form (see Appendix C) was completed and submitted after review by my committee members. The application included an Informed Consent letter (see Appendix D) as part of the survey form to be handed out to participants. Filling out and handing in the survey implied consent to the conditions of the survey. A letter from the Portland Children's Museum Education Programs Manager, granting permission to conduct the survey in the museum rounded out the application. The IRB form detailed plans for conducting the survey to ensure that all survey activities are ethical.

Together, data gathered through the survey, website reviews, and research provided a picture of how play is being used in art museums today. This

information was used to create a guide for parents/caregivers to use during art museum visits with early childhood students. The guide includes information on preparing for visits, how to use play to manage the visit, questions and definitions to include in conversations, and games and activities for encouraging interaction with the artwork. My hope is that this type of guidance will help adults feel more comfortable in introducing young children to a traditional art museum setting and provided a foundation for talking, making, and thinking about art with them.

Research Site

Survey research was conducted at the Portland Children's Museum in Portland, OR. The museum is designed around the philosophies of Reggio Emilia and provides a variety of hands-on, interactive exhibits for young children and their caregivers. The museum offers a small selection of classes that allow young children and their adults in-depth exploration of a subject area. The museum serves more than 300,000 children from birth through age 10 a year.

Additional art museum research was conducted via the Internet on a selection of museums throughout the United States. These museums differ both in size and demographics. The final guidebook was geared toward touring the Portland Art Museum but can be adapted to other settings.

Data Collection Procedures

Literature was reviewed to discover suggested methods for the use of play with preschool and early childhood students. Websites were reviewed to collect information on early childhood and preschool programming at a variety of

museums. Particular attention was paid to tours and activities involving children and their caretakers as well as classes offered to attended and unattended children. Survey results were used to cross-check research in categories such as information parents are interested in and their successes and struggles at the art museum.

Project Design

The parent survey results (see Appendix E) provided an interesting look at the issues parents/caregiver face and the information they feel is missing from their museum visits. 69% of parents visit the art museum with their child with 55% visiting once a month or less. 44% of those visits occur without any guidance from museum educators or docents and another 44% of the visits are some combination of visiting without guidance and guided tours. The main concern parents/caregivers feel they face in visiting the art museum is keeping the interest of their child. Additionally, they worry about managing crowds and how to make the artwork relevant to the child. The quietness of the museum and the fact that most of the artwork is positioned too high for the child to view effectively round out the list of concerns. 85% of parents/caregivers feel that having suggested activities and games for the art museum visit would help make it more interesting and manageable. Information on talking to children about art, language to introduce, and follow-up activities are also high on their list of information needed. The survey shows that parents/caregivers recognize the value of visiting the art museum with their child but feel the lack of programming

and information on sharing art with early childhood and preschool aged children leaves them ill-prepared to introduce art and a traditional museum setting on their own.



Figure 1 Cover for Play in the Art Museum: An Art Museum Guide for Preschool Kids and Their Adults

Research from Early Childhood at Play in the Art Museum led to the booklet, in both print and online at Issuu.com, and associated website *Play in the Art Museum: An Art Museum Guide for Preschool Kids and Their Adults* (see

Figure 1). Information in the booklet is influenced by current literature as well as the information gained from the parent survey. Unlike family guides found on museum websites and at the library, this guide is specific to preschool aged children and contains information for planning and extension activities in addition to the visit to the museum. The booklet contains seven sections to consider before going to the art museum with eight additional cards parents/caregivers can take with them during their visit to the museum. The booklet can easily be used at any museum but the cards would need to be modified as some were designed with the Portland Art Museum's collection specifically in mind. The overall layout of the booklet and cards is influenced by the three-part visit suggested in two articles (Krakowski, 2012, (Trimmis & Savva, 2004) with pre-visit and post-visit activities enhancing and building on the learning and excitement of the visit itself. Play is presented as a way to visit the museum that is intrinsically motivating because it is fun (Csikszentmihalyi, 1995) and provides the mindset of remaining open to possibilities (Burnham, & Kai-Kee, 2011). The goal of the booklet is to provide adults with the information and activities they need to create meaningful and engaging museum visits with their children, all in an unintimidating, easy to use, and inviting package.

A Walk Through Playing at the Art Museum

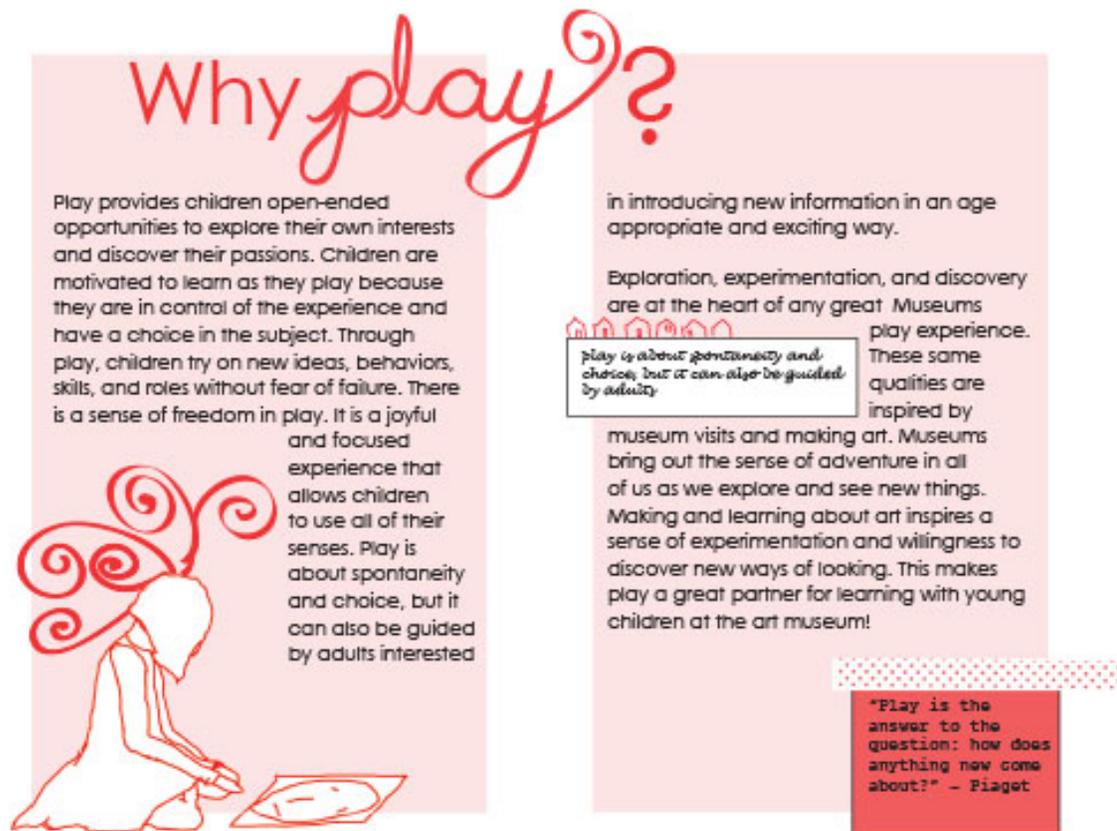


Figure 2 Why play in the art museum section

Inspired by the survey showing parents/caregivers looking for ways to make art museum visits interesting and relevant to their child, “Why play in the art museum” (see Figure 2) is an introduction to the value and possibilities of using play to engage young children in looking at, thinking about, and making art at art museums. The section describes connections between play, art, and museum visits. The three activities each inspire similar feelings of exploration, experimentation, and engagement with a subject. The definitions and connections were influenced by Zollinger and Attencio (2007) who describe play as “children’s work” and the time when children can scaffold their own learning

through trying “behaviors, thoughts, experiences, roles, and skills out at a level above their normal cognitive level and in a safe arena” (Zollinger & Attencio, 2007, p. 246). The goal of this section is to open parent/caregivers minds to the importance of play in children’s lives and its value as a tool in learning.

How to use play in the art museum!

using play and your child's interests to keep them engaged and excited about seeing art

Using play in the art museum isn't about giving up control of your child, it is about using play and interests to keep your child engaged and excited about seeing art and talking and learning about it with you. Focusing on play keeps us from looking for one right answer and opens our minds to experimentation and exploration of new ideas. This makes it great for introducing the art museum to children in a way that makes connections and minimizes the fear of making mistakes.

Adults play an important part in keeping learning activities playful. Playing along with your child will encourage and excite him as you create a memorable experience. Try to let the activity unfold according to your child's interest instead of guiding him toward a right answer or the "real world". Imagining and experimenting are key ingredients in play and in experiencing art. Allow yourself to experience the museum alongside your child.

Remember that learning for early childhood and preschool children happens through interacting personally with each work of art, not through hearing and memorizing information about it. With this in mind, you should try to be flexible with time while you are at

*"People tend to forget that play is serious."
-David Hockney*

The infographic features a drawing of a king in a white dress and crown, pointing towards the text.

Figure 3 How to use play in the art museum section

“How to use play in the art museum” (see Figure 3) gives more specific information on how play fits into the museum environment without alienating more traditional visitors. This section came out of information from the parent survey showing that 85% of parents/caregivers who responded felt that having suggested activities and games for the art museum visit would help make it more

interesting and manageable. The focus of this section is the idea that parents/caregivers needn't give up control of their child to bring playfulness, games, and activities into the visit. Burnham & Kai-Kee (2011) suggested that adults play an important role in interpretation by engaging children and keeping the conversation moving. The role of the adults in both management and encouragement of playfulness is emphasized in this section. The requirements for successful play are, therefore, listed as a guide for adults planning an art museum visit.

Sergeant Richardson (2012) discusses the importance of play in developing creativity and provides the most interesting look at the factors children need met to truly engage in play. Her list includes *open environments*, *flexible tools*, *modifiable rules*, and *superpowers*. It was this idea of *superpowers*, of encouraging children to use their own physical and mental skills to challenge the rules of the game, which spoke to me as the best definition of play. The goal of the section is to prepare parents/caregivers for the effective use of play in the art museum setting by providing criteria and suggestions for creating the perfect setting to encourage playfulness.

Before you go...

Planning for your museum visit is as important as the visit itself. Museums can be overwhelming for children and their caregivers at first with all of the sights, sounds, and activity. Having some basic information can help alleviate stress and allow you to hit the ground running.

Checklist:
 Museum Layout
 Rules
 Introduce your child
 Consider your child's interest
 Pick a Theme
 Make Art

Museum layout
 Look at the museum map. Most museums have maps on their websites. Look for spaces designed specifically for children. Also, look for the locations of bathrooms and areas where food and drinks are allowed. Some museums have family guides that can be printed out to help with navigating the museum. Look at the galleries and special exhibits to get an idea of what you will be able to see during your visit. This information can help in

planning which galleries to visit and how you will move through the museum.

Rules and expectations
 It also helps to know what the museum rules are. Do you have to be quiet? Can you bring in pencils or other art materials? Take some time to think about what you are expecting from your child during the visit as well.

Having some basic information can help alleviate some of the stress and allow you to hit the ground running.



Figure 4 Before you go... section

“Before you go...” (see Figure 4) guides parents/caregivers through the process of gathering the information and supplies they will need to prepare for their visit and keep their child engaged and moving throughout the visit. With 88% of parents/caregivers who responded answering that they spent all or some of their visits touring on their own, it became important to include information on how to get them in the door of the museum and past the intimidation and stress. This section provides recommendations for planning the museum visit including becoming familiar with the museum layout, available exhibits, and child-specific areas of the museum in advance of one’s visit to help alleviate the stress of

negotiating the museum on arrival and facilitate movement through the museum by focusing on areas of interest. Introducing the child to the museum is an important component of this section, suggesting that the parent/caregiver share the museum map and information as well as rules and personal expectations before leaving for the museum. Falk and Dierking (1992) state that this type of introduction allows the child time to prepare and develop his/her own agenda for the visit.

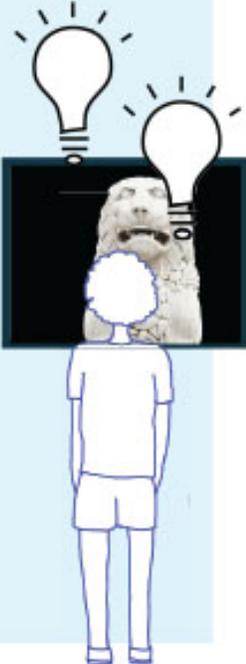
Suggestions for planning a visit that connects to the child's interests and for choosing a theme that provides a hook (Krakowski, 2012) to learning lead parents/caregivers through the process of planning museum visits that make meaningful connections for their child and lead to lifelong learning. This section also includes recommendations for toys and books to include in the visit and how to incorporate them as both a break from walking through exhibits and connections between the child's everyday life and the artwork he is viewing.

The final suggestion for planning for the art museum visit is that parents/caregivers make art with their child before heading to the museum. This provides the child an opportunity to experience some of the materials he/she will view as well as the opportunity to develop an understanding of the process of making art. The section is influenced by Krakowski's description of a museum visit to the Warhol Museum with a preschool class. The use of the children's play interests as a theme for the visit allowed educators to focus on a few works of art and provide activities that were playful and surprising at each piece. The result

was a learning experience that led to comfort in the museum and excitement about the art the students saw and made — even a year after the visit. Setting out rules and goals for the visit was influenced by Csikszentmihalyi's (1995) idea of flow which points out that understanding goals in advance allows the child to immerse himself completely in the visit. Providing parents with planning information is intended to help them prepare for the museum visit, limiting stress and confusion and allowing for better use of their visit.

Choosing art

Choosing the right art to view with your child can be the difference between boredom and excitement. Not all art is the same. Some pieces have more complicated images or subjects that are inappropriate for your child. Your child already has preferences for certain colors and subjects and these can be great guides for choosing art to look at since they provide your child with a connection to something familiar. Focus on pieces that fit your child's age and interests.



Look for:

- Subjects that are identifiable or, at least, somewhat familiar.
- Artwork that tells a story - portraits, landscape, seascape, cityscape, and self-portraits provide starting points for great stories and connections.
- A mix of cultures and styles for interest and expanding your child's ideas of art
- A variety of mediums from painting to sculpture and photography
- Simple, colorful, high contrast works provide easy access for your child

"We learn to read through the activity of reading; others assist by supplying the right challenge at the right time. Why not apply the same principles to choosing art to engage and motivate beginning viewers?"
Philip Yenawine

Figure 5 Choosing Art section

"Choosing art" (see Figure 5) is a quick and easy guide to choosing artwork that is engaging and age appropriate. This information is an important part of preparing for a museum visit and allows playfulness to be the focus of the

visit. I shared with parents/caregivers the fact that children are ready for aesthetic experiences with art and choosing pieces the child can connect with can be the key to a successful visit. A list of things to look for, like identifiable subjects and mixing mediums and cultures, is also provided. This section was greatly influenced by Yenawine's "Jumpstarting visual literacy: Thoughts on image selection." The author compares viewing art and learning to read and explains the need for adults to provide "the right challenge at the right time" (Yenawine, 2003, p. 6). This section is intended to take some of the guessing and intimidation out of choosing which works of art to spend time with at the museum.



Figure 6 Talking about art

“Talking about art” (see Figure 6) is meant to encourage conversation between parents/caregivers and children and eliminate fears parents/caregivers may have about saying the wrong thing. The section begins by sharing that the elements of art, like color and shape, tend to be part of daily conversations with young children as they explore their world and expand their vocabularies. The use of questions is given as a specific tool to use with this age group, letting them know their responses are valued and encouraging deeper thinking about the artwork.

Talking about art in this way was influenced by the philosophies of Reggio Emilia and Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). Both encourage children to share their thoughts and feeling and to learn by listening to others. Bruehl (2011)

suggests that children need to be encouraged to develop creativity, discernment, and curiosity in their learning. Parents can encourage this open-mindedness and perspective by listening, providing provocations, and helping children manage any information they are uncertain of (Bruehl, 2011). The result is parents and children taking the opportunity to listen and learn from each other, expanding their thoughts and understandings of art.

Keep Going!

Your child will become more comfortable in the museum with each additional visit. Breaking up the museum into several shorter visits will keep everyone's attention fresh and allow you to see more of the museum. Repeat visits also allow you to build on what was learned in previous visits. Once you are done with your visit, you can extend your child's learning by doing activities at home that are inspired by what you've seen and talked about.

Read

Books, magazines, or websites that relate to an artist or a subject you discovered during your visit are a great way to connect to your visit and build on the excitement and learning!

Making art is equivalent to appreciating art, as both actions are creative."
Ishikawa



Make art!

Use your visit as inspiration for creating your own works of art. Try a new medium or use the sketches made during your visit to inspire a work of art. For example, use the shapes and colors your child drew to create a collage by tearing or cutting pieces and rearranging them. As you are making art, talk about how it is connected with what you experienced at the museum. Display the art you make in a style similar to the galleries to allow for more discussion and sharing of ideas about the museum.

Play is training for the unexpected.
-Marc Beckoff

Create a collection

Now that you've seen a collection, make one of your own! Talk about what you would like to collect and how you will display it. Your collection can be anything from plastic animals to your child's artwork. Have your child help organize and set up the display. Once you've set up your collection, let your child lead a tour!

Figure 7 Keep Going section

"Keep Going" (see Figure 7) provides information for the third phase of the art museum visit, the follow-up activities. Here, I point out the value of multiple short visits to the art museum and of reinforcing each visit with activities at home

that build on those done in the museum. I've suggested specific activities like reading books on a particular artistic movement or artist and creating collections of objects at home. These activities allow for inspiration found at the museum to carry over into the everyday life and build on the learning that happens inside the museum. Trimmis and Savva (2004) influenced this section with the suggestion of a three-part visit. They argue the third part of the visit should be a time to recall the time in the museum and use the artwork seen to extend ideas and inspiration to one's own works of art. 54% of parents/caregivers surveyed were interested in information on making connections beyond the art museum. "Keep Going" is intended to provide the information parents/caregivers are looking for to extend learning opportunities, creativity, and inspiration through activities that revisit the museum experience.

The final section in the booklet is "More resources". This section is intended to provide parents with links to further reading on sharing art and museum experiences with their child. There are links to a variety of museums, blogs for sharing art activities, and articles further detailing art experiences. In addition, a short list of children's books to share at the museum is included. These are books that talk about art or museum experiences from a child's point of view. The section is intended to encourage parents to look at sharing art with their child beyond one visit to the art museum.



Figure 8 Eight cards included at back of book

The eight cards (see Figure 8) included at the back of the booklet are intended for use as quick guides during the museum visit. The set includes four suggested tours that explore *shape*, *creature*, *color*, and *family* providing for a wide variety of interests. The tours are designed to give parents/caregivers an idea of how to set up a tour, how many pieces to include, and how to make connections between a variety of mediums and cultures. While based on the collection at the Portland Museum of Art, these examples can be applied to other museums. A fifth card provides a treasure hunt for the contemporary art galleries. This is meant as an introduction to artwork that can be more challenging for younger children but is still interesting and engaging. The idea behind the treasure hunt is to encourage both parent and child to connect with works of art that can seem intimidating by finding things from their everyday life like shapes,

colors, or activities happening in a variety of mediums.

The remaining cards provide helpful information for parents/caregivers creating their own tours or looking for additional talking points during the suggested tours. These were designed to meet the needs of parents/caregivers looking for specific language and activities to use with their child. The “Words to Use” card provides a short list of words introducing parents/caregivers to the vocabulary of art and encouraging them to use these words in conversations at the museum. The “Questions to guide” card provides a general list of questions parents/caregivers can use when talking about a work of art with their child. The questions include those suggested by Visual Thinking Skills as well as questions included in Yenawine’s “Jump starting visual literacy: Thoughts on image selection”. The “Play in the museum” card includes games and activities to encourage children and parents/caregivers to look more carefully at a work of art while playing and interacting with each other. The suggested tours as well as the activity cards use playful activities including movement, drama, and art making to encourage interaction with works of art. The cards provide parents/caregivers with a set of tools to take into the museum setting in an easily usable format available for quick glances as they move through the museum with their child.

Play in the Art Museum: An Art Museum Guide for Preschool Kids and Their Adults is designed to take into consideration a wide variety of research including museum websites, literature review, and a survey of parents. Greatly influenced by the parent survey, the booklet covers the wide variety of

information and activities parents' feel is missing from their attempts to visit the art museum with their child. Playful activities provide the connections adults are looking for to provide opportunities for looking at, thinking about, and making art in a relevant and engaging way. Leading educators and writers in the art, education, and museum fields influence the information included in the guide as well. The result is a short, easily accessible guide that takes the guesswork out of taking an early childhood or preschool child to the art museum. The intimidation of the museum setting is removed by providing parents/caregivers a way to successfully introduce their child to the more traditional museum setting in a way that combines fun and learning for all involved.

Conclusion

Future Direction

Early Childhood at play in the art museum has potential for expansion in many areas. Cooperation from the art museums could lead to more in-depth tours geared toward this age group and supported by the museum staff. In addition, the booklet could be expanded with general tours applicable to any art museum or a wider range of museums. Expansion of the parent survey to include parents/caregivers who aren't enrolled in art classes with their child would give a broader understanding of how to encourage visits to the art museum with young children by understanding the needs of those parents/caregivers who don't engage in art activities with their child. Finally, the creation of an application useable for smartphones and tablets would expand the audience for the booklet

and make sharing the information easier while drawing in those parents/caregivers who enjoy using technology in a museum setting. Expanding the project will allow relevant access to information for a broader group of parents/caregivers as they look to experience the art museum with their child in an exciting and playful way that will build lifelong museum visiting and love of art.

Conclusion

The number of parents/caregivers looking to experience the art museum with their child increases each year as museums are seen as great places to learn. The lack of programming for young children, however, leaves many adults struggling to find ways to make these visits relevant and engaging as well as educational. *Play in the Art Museum: An Art Museum Guide for Preschool Kids and Their Adults* provides parents/caregiver with the information needed to prepare for, engage in, and follow-up on art museum visits with their preschool or early childhood child in one spot for easy access. The information is presented in a relaxed, unintimidating way that allows parents/caregivers to feel comfortable in approaching art and the art museum with their child. Parents/caregivers can use the information to connect the playful learning that comes naturally to young children to the beauty and aesthetic experiences of a museum. The guide fills the gap left by the lack of programming and encourages a new generation of museum-goers to see the art museum as a place that fits their needs and interests.

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Appendix A

Art Museum Website Review

Museum	Activities for 4 & under	Details
Art Institute of Chicago	Yes	Family Room w/ interactive stories and games, original works and related books; Family self guide; Gallery game
Children’s Museum of the Arts	Yes	hands-on art museum; WEE art studio for 5 and under w/ music, storytelling, and art making; exhibits feature work by children and adults; WEE Arts workshops are drop-in multi-sensory classes; Classes for 1 and up and adult
Cleveland Museum of Art	Yes	Gallery One – interactive w/ multi-touch screen, StudioPlay, Shadow Puppets, Mobile building, games; 2 nd Sunday Family Days w/ free art making, explore museum through dance, music, hands-on activities; My Very 1 st Art Class- art making, story telling, play, and movement
Columbus Museum of Art	Yes	Wonder Room – hands-on playful activities; Tote Bag with activities focusing on works in the exhibit; Family Gallery; Family Adventures- guided tour with family working as team; Gallery Fun – hands-on activities in the galleries
Dallas Museum of Art	Yes	(we)ekends – look in gallery then join art making activities, change monthly; Sketching in the Galleries – supplies available at Art Cart; First Tuesday – 5 and under visit gallery for activities, story, art making; Classes for 2 to 3 and 3 to 5; Interactive Gallery Tour with education staff; Art Spot
Denver Art Museum	Yes	

Museum	Activities for 4 & under	Details
Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art	Yes	Art Studio open for all ages; Reggio Emilia inspired
Kimbell Art Museum	No	
The Metropolitan Museum of Art	Yes	Start w/ Art – 3 to 7 yr old plus adult look, sketch, listen to stories, make art; How did They Do That – all ages handle tools and explore how art is made; Sunday Studio; Family Guides
MoMA	Yes	Gallery Guides; Audio Tours; MoMa Art Labs to play and create through hands-on activities
National Gallery of Art	No	
The Nelson Atkins Museum of Art	Yes	Weekends have hands-on activities, close looking and conversation; Family Festivals; Storytime for preschoolers 2 nd Sunday; Family Gallery Guides; Classes for 3 and up.
Portland Museum of Art	No	
Seattle Museum of Art	Yes	Family Fun! Day of activities on Saturdays during select months, Knudson Family Room
Toledo Museum of Art	Yes	Family Center; Family Time Tours – relate to works on view in Family Center; Gallery Gear for 2 to 8 yr olds- tote bag with hands-on activities, books, multimedia materials and family guide; Gallery Hunts; Classes for 3 to 5 with parent

Museum	Activities for 4 & under	Details
Walters Art Museum	Yes	Art Tots- art making and tour for 2-3 and adult; ArtKids – tour and art activity with adult; Art Cart; Discovery Quilts; Family Guides for intergenerational exploration; Art Sacks: Family Audio Guides; Wondrous Journeys Passport – 6 stamps earns prize; Family Art Center
Whitney Museum of American Art	No	

Appendix B

Early Childhood at Play in the Art Museum Survey

1. Do you visit art museums with your child? Yes / no

2. If yes, how often?

3. When you visit an art museum, is it as part of a program or to tour the galleries on your own?

4. What challenges do you face when visiting and art museum with your child?

5. What have you found successful when visiting the art museum with your child?

6. What resources or information would be helpful in encouraging / improving art museum visits? Select all that apply.

	Pre-visit planning		activities / games to complete during visit
	how to talk about art with young children		how to choose art work to view
	language to introduce during your visit		other:
	follow-up activities		

Appendix C

UFIRB 02 – Social & Behavioral Research			
Protocol Submission Form			
<i>This form must be typed. Send this form and the supporting documents to IRB02, PO Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611. Should you have questions about completing this form, call 352-392-0433.</i>			
Title of Protocol:	Early Childhood at Play in the Art Museum		
Principal Investigator:	Amber Jenkins		UFID #: 9022-2110
Degree / Title:	MFA Art Education	Mailing Address: (If on campus include PO Box address): 2121 SE Belmont St, Apt 209 Portland, OR 97214	Email: amijenkins@ufl.edu
Department:	Art Education		Telephone #: 503.734.9717
Co-Investigator(s):		UFID#:	Email:
Supervisor (If PI is student):	Jodi Kushins		UFID#:1532-0118
Degree / Title:	Professor	Mailing Address: (If on campus include PO Box address): 143 E Dominion Blvd Columbus, OH 43214	Email : jkushins@ufl.edu
Department:	Art Education		Telephone #: 614 499 6176
Date of Proposed Research:	April 2013 – June 2013		
Source of Funding (A copy of the grant proposal must be submitted with this protocol if funding is involved):	none		
Scientific Purpose of the Study: Gain an understanding of parent/caregiver needs and interests regarding visiting an art museum with their children. The information will be used to create a guide for use in art museum visits.			

<p>Describe the Research Methodology in Non-Technical Language: <i>(Explain what will be done with or to the research participant.)</i></p> <p>A survey of 6 questions- 4 open-ended, one checklist, and one dichotomous – on paper will be handed out to parents and caregivers currently enrolled in an early childhood art class. Surveys will be placed in a box when completed. Participation will be anonymous and voluntary.</p>					
<p>Describe Potential Benefits:</p> <p>Understanding the information and guidance parents and caregivers are interested in or feel they need will assist in developing an engaging and useful art museum visit guide for early childhood and preschool children and their parents/caregivers.</p>					
<p>Describe Potential Risks: <i>(If risk of physical, psychological or economic harm may be involved, describe the steps taken to protect participant.)</i></p> <p>The surveys will not include any personal or compromising information so there is no risk to participants.</p>					
<p>Describe How Participant(s) Will Be Recruited:</p> <p>Participants will be chosen based on their participation in an early childhood art class.</p>					
Maximum Number of Participants (to be approached with consent)	24	Age Range of Participants :	24+	Amount of Compensation/ course credit:	\$0
<p>Describe the Informed Consent Process. <i>(Attach a Copy of the Informed Consent Document. See http://irb.ufl.edu/irb02/samples.html for examples of consent.)</i></p> <p>A letter explaining the project and survey will be included as part of the survey.</p>					
(SIGNATURE SECTION)					
Principal Investigator(s) Signature:					Date:
Co-Investigator(s) Signature(s):					Date: 4/12/2013
Supervisor's Signature (if PI is a student):					Date:
Department Chair Signature:					Date:

April 12, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

Amber Jenkins has permission to conduct research with the Paint and Play parents at Portland Children's Museum. I understand that this research is being conducted as part of a graduate student project and thesis. I understand that the focus of this study is the use of play in early childhood art museum programming.

If a parent volunteers to participate in this study, they will be asked to fill out a survey on their previous experience and future interest in art museum visits with their children.

There are no potential physical risks or physical discomfort that will take place during this research. The written information provided by parents and caregivers through the survey will remain with principal researcher, but findings will be available to the public through University of Florida. Parent/caregiver names, titles and other private information will be kept confidential by principal researcher. Parent opinions and thoughts will be kept confidential by tracking the information and not who provided it.

Parents can choose whether or not to be in this study. If they choose to volunteer to be in the study, they may withdraw at any time without consequence of any kind. They may also choose not to participate, or refuse to answer any questions they do not want to answer.

Questions or concerns about this research can be answered by contacting Amber Jenkins, principal researcher at 503.734.9717 or email ajenkins4@gmail.com.

Sincerely yours



4/17/13

Kristi Riedel
Museum Education Programs Manager
Portland Children's Museum

DATE OF IRB APPROVAL:
IRBNet NUMBER:
IRB NUMBER:
PROJECT EXPIRATION DATE:

Appendix D

Dear Parent/Grandparent/Caregiver:

I am a graduate student at the University of Florida in the Art Education program. As part of my coursework I am conducting a survey, the purpose of which is to learn about art museum visits with young children and information parents and caregivers would find useful in encouraging and enhancing such visits. The survey is 6 questions and will take about 15 minutes to complete. You will not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law and your identity will not be revealed in the final manuscript.

There are no anticipated risks, compensation or other direct benefits to you as a participant in this interview. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation in the survey at any time without consequence.

By filling out the survey, you give me permission to report your responses anonymously in the final manuscript to be submitted to my faculty supervisor as part of my course work. Questions may be directed to my supervisor, Prof. Jodi Kushins, at (614) 499.6176 or myself, Amber Jenkins, at (503) 734.9717.

For additional questions about your rights as a participant in this study, contact the University of Florida's IRB Compliance Hotline at 352-392-0433.

Thanks,

Amber Jenkins

Appendix E

Early Childhood at Play in the Art Museum Survey Results		
Do you visit the art museum with your child?	yes	69%
	no	31%
If yes, how often	once a year	22%
	6-12 times a year	33%
	weekly	44%
When you visit an art museum, is it as part of a program or to tour the galleries on your own?	Tour	12%
	Alone	44%
	Both	44%
What challenges	Making it relevant	15%
	Too quiet	8%
	Keeping interest	46%
	Artwork too high	15%
	Crowds	15%
What has been successful	Pre-planning	8%
	Snacks	8%
	Extra adult	15%
	Child leads	8%
	Familiarity	8%
	Lower art like sculpture	15%
Resources	Pre-visit planning	38%
	How to talk to young children about art	62%
	Language to introduce during your visit	54%
	Follow-up activities	54%
	Activities/games to complete during visit	85%
	How to choose artwork to view	38%
	other	

Biography

Amber Jenkins was born in and spent most of her childhood in Kansas City. She obtained a Bachelors Degree from Kansas State University. In 2003, Amber returned to school and obtained a BFA in Graphic Design. The next several years were spent doing freelance website and identity design for local small businesses. In 2012, Amber moved to Portland, OR where she currently resides with her husband and daughter.

Amber is currently a student in the University of Florida's online Masters in Art Education program. She is an assistant with the children's art classes at the Portland Children's Museum. Upon completion of the program, she hopes to continue working with preschool and early elementary students teaching art.