The signatures of life
Communication Design and Difficult Exhibitions

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Abbreviations

AFA Alliance of Forgotten Australians
AFCMF Association of Former Child Migrants and their Families
ANMM Australian National Maritime Museum
AWM Andy Warhol Museum
CHS Chicago Historical Society
CLAN Care Leavers Australia Network
CMT Child Migrant's Trust
FaHCSIA Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
MCP Moral Courage Project
MM Melbourne Museum
MoS Museum of Sydney
NLA National Library of Australia
NMA National Museum of Australia
PJ Picture Justice (Program)
UNIS United Nations International School
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Certificate of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge and belief, understand that it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis (or dissertation, as appropriate). Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged. I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services, Charles Sturt University or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of thesis, subject to confidentiality provisions as approved by the University.

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The following co-authored papers were published from this research:


Permission to cite these publications within this research has been granted by the co-authors.

This exegesis is accompanied by the ‘Ligatures of Life’ website: https://www.ligaturesoflife.com/
For Ben

Knowledge is power.
Abstract

The increase of ‘difficult’ exhibitions within contemporary exhibiting marks a significant shift in the way communities tell their stories. Upending the more traditional, heroic narratives of nationhood, difficult exhibitions speak of genocide, gender violence, contested histories, war or death, presenting unique pedagogical challenges for exhibitors and visitors alike. Despite the availability of related literature from a wide range of disciplines, the contribution from Communication Design has been negligible—even more so from a practice-led perspective. Addressing this gap via a methodological bricolage, ‘The Ligatures of Life’ frames the difficult exhibition as a performance of ideology, employing multimodal, semiotic resources as its actors. This research has questioned the role of the designer across four distinct projects for the non-profit organisation, PROOF: Media for Social Justice: Broken?, Unearthed: Stories of Courage in the Face of Sexual Violence, Picturing Moral Courage: The Rescuers, and Ferguson Voices: Disrupting the Frame. In order to better understand the designer’s role and establish a model of best practice, an interpretive model has been developed that combines critical hermeneutics with social semiotic, multimodal analysis. The CHaSSMM Model has shown significant value in fostering a critical distance between the designer and practice, revealing underlying power structures, and assisting in the articulation of tacit knowledge between an exhibition’s team.
1 Introduction

1.1 Overview of the research

This research explores the practice of designing what Roger I. Simon defined as ‘difficult exhibitions’: that is, exhibits that contain information related to issues such as genocide, gender violence, war, death or contested histories (J. Bonnell & Simon, 2007; Britzman, 1998, p. 20; Pitt & Britzman, 2003; R. I. Simon, 2011, 2012, 2014). These types of exhibitions are a relatively new phenomenon within the genre, reflecting a shift in the culture of exhibiting over the last few decades, from the more heroic narratives of nationhood, to the display of more complex, darker aspects of our past and present (Healy & Witcomb, 2006a; Karp, 1991a; Karp, Kreamer, & Lavine, 1992; Karp & Lavine, 1991; Witcomb, 2015). While a diversity of disciplines has contributed to this quite specific field of exhibiting, there is a noticeable absence of contributions from practice-led design research. This gap drives this inquiry. Situated within the discipline of Communication Design, this research examines the role of design practice in the development of difficult exhibitions, and argues that they are best understood as representations of ideological frameworks, performed by a multimodality of semiotic resources. One outcome of this research is the initiation and development of the CHaSSMM Model of Analysis, within which I combine Critical Hermeneutics with Social Semiotic and Multimodal theories. This model has been implemented and tested over the course of four difficult exhibition projects in this research, designed for the non-profit organisation, PROOF: Media for Social Justice: Broken?, Unearthed: Stories of Courage in the Face of Sexual Violence, Picturing Moral Courage: The Rescuers, and Ferguson Voices: Disrupting the Frame.
1.1.1 Context of the research

This research is in response to the design practice I have been undertaking as the Creative Director of PROOF: Media for Social Justice. My association with PROOF began in 2009, when I designed what would become the first iteration of the exhibition Picturing Moral Courage: The Rescuers. This exhibition was redesigned in English and Bosnian, opening in Sarajevo in 2011, and became the subject of my Honours research. It was during this time, searching for literature on the design of exhibitions that contained what I would come to understand as ‘difficult knowledge’, that I would discover the significant gap in literature that exists in specific relation to difficult exhibitions from a Communication Design perspective, and a lack of existing models of best practice that could inform design. This research is not only seeking to contribute to the literature, but also foster best practices in design. The particular context of working within the organisational framework of PROOF is integral to this. Communication Designers seldom work alone, and this is particularly true within the difficult exhibition context, which often involves teams of people with skills and experience that traverse a wide range of disciplines. The context of research, therefore, is indelibly informed by the opportunities and limitations presented by the organisational context. This in turn allows for the development methods that encourage communication between team members, and through the promotion of an explicit understanding of a project’s ideology and aims, works towards informing and supporting Communication Design practice for difficult exhibitions.

1.1.2 Scope of the research

As a practice-led research project, this research is designed to focus on the development of methods that support interpretation and practice within Communication Design for difficult exhibitions. Communication (or Graphic) Design has been defined as ‘the art and practice of planning and projecting ideas and experiences with visual and textual content. The form it takes can be physical or virtual and can include images, words, or graphics’ (Cezzar, 2017). It involves the effective communication of concepts through a variety of visual means, such as print and electronic media, ‘in the context of business and technology, socio-political, cultural and educational environments, in transmitting government and institutional aims and services, and in visually explaining and exploring medical and scientific data and processes (Society of Graphic Designers of Canada, 2018). It is also recognised for its important role in delivering message and effect, and therefore brings with it a responsibility to understand existing systems of belief held by either the organisations or recipients (Luminant Design LLC, 2014). However, as exhibition design can include other project-specific modes of communication, such as sound, lighting and space, there is a need to expand upon definitions of Communication Design in this context. Therefore, where applicable within this research, other fields of design, such as interpretation or participatory design, have been consulted. Interpretation Design has been defined as ‘the planned creation of environments that communicate ideas, support visitor understanding of object displays and contribute meaningful visitor experiences’ (Roberts, 2015, p. 379). Participatory design, which has been implemented in a range of museum projects over the last 15 years, is based on the idea that visitors can also contribute to a project’s creation, and is a strategy for addressing a specific problem (N. Simon, 2010).

As the title of this research suggests, the initial scope of the research was focused on investigating the design of typographic representations of people’s testimonies of trauma. However, by developing a greater understanding for the complexity of difficult exhibitions, a more holistic perspective of difficult exhibitions emerged, viewing them instead as collections of multimodal, semiotic resources that perform ideology. This shift is a response to the specific nature of the difficult exhibitions within this research, which span a wide variety of contexts and subjects, as well as the specific organisational structure of PROOF’s small team and tight budgets. This research also recognises the importance of understanding the wider contributions made to the field of difficult exhibitions by other disciplines, particularly due to a lack of literature from the Communication Design field. As such, this project’s scope sits very much within the planning and design stages of difficult exhibition projects, and the development and testing of the CHaSSMM Model has been predominantly located in these stages. However, it should be noted that, while this is done with an eye towards visitor engagement, particularly through the research phase of projects and understanding the context of display, it is not within the scope of this project to undertake visitor evaluations. Instead,
the aim of narrowing the scope of this project to the phases of research, planning and production of Communication Design, I aim to establish practical outcomes that have real-world applications for design practice.

1.2 Research framework

This research sits within a qualitative framework, with a constructivist perspective. The research design is led by the research aims, objectives and questions, as outlined below. As such, it takes a practice-led approach to its epistemological and ontological position. The practice is supported with this exegesis, which explores the difficult exhibition field from a wide range of perspectives, outlines the design of the research methodology and methods, articulates the theoretical framework that has informed the development of the CHaSSMM Model, and provides an overview and analysis of the exhibitions that make up the practice component of this research.

1.2.1 Aims, objectives and research questions

The aim of this research is to develop best practices in relation to the design of difficult exhibitions, while also addressing the notable lack of literature and models of best practice from the field of Communication Design in relation to this specific area of practice. The following objectives of this research are:

1. To develop a theoretical scaffolding for practice that provides a framework to support practice through an informed understanding of difficult knowledge, difficult exhibitions, the cultural aspects of their presence in the world, and empowering the agency of the designer.

2. That the theoretical scaffolding informs the development of methods for best practice that are specific and responsive to real-world demands within the practice of designing difficult exhibitions.

These aims and objectives derive from the research questions, which are:

1. What is the nature of difficult exhibition projects and their role within communities, culture and society?

2. What are the key aspects of the designer's role within these projects?

3. How can difficult exhibitions be better understood as performances of ideological frameworks?

4. What can a multimodal, social semiotic perspective bring to difficult exhibition design?

1.2.2 Research methodology

The methodological approach has been driven by the research aims, objectives and questions, as well as the still-emerging nature of the practice-led design research discipline. A methodological bricolage is implemented as a response to the needs of the research, and is informed by the design field, which has increasingly utilised bricolage as a methodological approach across a range of design fields, including Communication Design (Yee & Bremner, 2011).

A methodological bricolage enables design researchers to respond to disciplinary needs, rather than attempting to have another discipline's methodological framework fit practice-led design inquiry. Still a relatively new field, practice-led design research does not sit within any one established discipline. Instead, the design of research needs to respond to a project's disparate parts, which often include artifacts, literature and the processes of design practice. This requires a critical selection of methods that often traverse the social sciences and science fields in order to address the particular needs of research; in this case, this includes close reading of documents and multimedia, open-ended interviews with exhibition professionals and explorations through reflexive design practice and its products.

1.2.3 Thematic conceptual framework

Difficult exhibitions are performed in the world, to visitors, via a range of multimodal, semiotic resources, which designers play a significant role in interpreting, ordering or creating. All aspects of this research contribute to the development of the CHaSSMM Model of Analysis, which emerged to support the interpretation and practice of designing difficult exhibitions. In developing the CHaSSMM Model, I combine critical hermeneutics with social semiotic and multimodal theories to create a framework for analysing how difficult exhibitions are the product of ideology, of power relations, and of
their time and culture. The CHaSSMM Model shapes a project’s research questions, provides methods for interpretation, and includes a ‘reflexive circuit’ model for designers to refer back to. By testing and implementing this model across four exhibition designs for this research, CHaSSMM presents a unique opportunity to enhance the design of difficult exhibitions.

1.2.4 Significance of the research

This research provides a significant contribution to the field of difficult exhibitions from the perspective of Communication Design. Firstly, it addresses the sizable gap in literature that currently exists in this field from the design discipline, as well as the absence of models of best practice for this specific area of design. Secondly, CHaSSMM presents this field with a practical model of analysis that is informed by theories that, in a variety of ways, help to explain the nature of difficult exhibitions. It should be noted that, while this research focuses specifically on developing CHaSSMM for difficult exhibitions, it is also showing some potential as an interpretive model for design in other fields, such as information for paediatric patients (Wahlin & Paulovich, 2017).

1.3 Exegesis structure

This exegesis is broken up into seven chapters. The chapters are to be read in conjunction with four difficult exhibition projects that are documented and viewable on the research website (https://www.ligaturesoflife.com). They are:

1. Broken?
2. Unearthed: Stories of Courage in the Face of Sexual Violence
3. Picturing Moral Courage: The Rescuers
4. Ferguson Voices: Disrupting the Frame

Following from this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the difficult exhibition field. It defines difficult knowledge and difficult exhibitions, and examines the growth of this genre from a wide range of perspectives and disciplines. Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical structure of the CHaSSMM Model and its application in relation to design theory. Chapter 4 explains the research design, including the methodology and methods and ontological and epistemological positions that have guided the design. Chapter 5 presents a case of the exhibition Inside: Life in Children’s Homes and Institutions (Arthur & Chynoweth, 2011), and includes interviews with the Head Curator, Co-Curator and Exhibition Designer. Chapter 6 examines the four exhibition projects that have played a significant role in the development, testing and implementation of the CHaSSMM Model. These projects make up the practice-led component of this research. Chapter 7 concludes with an analysis of this research’s findings and suggestions for future directions.
2 Difficult exhibitions. Difficult design.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine literature related to the ‘difficult exhibition’, its design, and its role within museums and beyond. In many ways, the emergence of the difficult exhibition is unsurprising: it is a response to some of the changing ideological narratives of our communities, as well as some of the deep reflection undertaken by those within the field of New Museology and Post New Museology over the last few decades. What is surprising is that, despite the diversity of disciplines that have contributed to this field, practice-led design research has contributed a comparatively small voice. By drawing together strands of literature related to difficult exhibitions and tying them together with the concerns of design practice, this chapter not only examines the nature of difficult exhibitions and their contribution to communities and citizenry, but also adds a practice-led designer’s voice to this intricate and fascinating field.

A multidisciplinary approach will be taken to understanding the nature of difficult exhibitions, their ‘poetics and politics’ (Lidchi 1997), and their role within contemporary exhibiting. This approach reflects the bricolage methodology that underpins other parts of this study; in order to understand the complex nature of difficult exhibitions, information has been selectively

1 ‘Difficult exhibitions’ are defined in this study as those that include information related to ‘difficult knowledge’ topics such as gender violence, genocide, contested histories, war or colonialism, for example. A more detailed overview of difficult knowledge and difficult exhibitions will follow in section 2.4 of this chapter.

2 In using the term ‘multidisciplinary’, I refer to this chapter’s use of a range of literature from a range of disciplines that have contributed to museum studies, including cultural studies, sociology, cultural heritage studies and museology.

3 Henrietta Lidchi (1997) defines the ‘poetics’ of exhibiting as ‘…the practice of producing meaning through the internal ordering and conjunction of the separate but related components of an exhibition’ (p. 168) and the ‘politics’ as ‘the role of exhibitions/museums in the production of social knowledge’ (p. 185).
gathered from a number of relevant disciplines that have contributed to this field, and links them to design practice and theory. This chapter, therefore, will begin with an overview of New Museology: although its central focus is almost exclusively the museum as a place of exhibition, New Museology offers exhibition designers, regardless of their institution or location, a useful insight into the social and cultural shifts that have added layers of complexity to the museum landscape over the last 30 years in particular.4 However, being a diverse field that that draws on contributions from a wide range of disciplines, a sharper focus will be on those studies within New Museology that are directly relevant to the emergence of difficult exhibitions, namely, Cultural Studies, Museum and Cultural Heritage Studies, Visitor, Education and Memory Studies, and Sociology. This will be followed by an examination of difficult knowledge and the rise of difficult exhibitions as a feature of the Post New Museology era. Together, this will provide a framework within which we can situate the designer’s role and responsibilities in the display of these complex exhibitions. An overview of more recent literature related to the role of designers will then link design practice to a social semiotic framework. This chapter aims to contribute the perspective of a designer of difficult exhibitions, and in doing so, shift the focus away from arguments that promote the affective value of ‘labels and objects’ as elements of exhibiting, and instead frame difficult exhibitions as multimodal5, social semiotic resources that allow exhibition creators to tell difficult stories to visitors in ways that enhance their affective value.

### 2.2 New Museology: Signaling a shift in museological narratives

New Museology is an interdisciplinary field that emerged in the late 1980s, and in many ways, it was a response to changes that were taking place in the world at the time. The Soviet Union broke apart. The Berlin Wall came down. The Tiananmen Square massacre sparked the shift to democracy in China, and the Western world ushered in the postcolonial era (Message, 2010). These events also became signals for an ideological shift within the museum sector. In the Western world in particular, the spread of democracy externally was similarly being called for within the museum, bringing with it a critical approach to the representations of people, their artifacts and cultures. This also marked a significant shift from the ‘old’ museology’s focus on the practices of conservation and display, towards what Sharon MacDonald called ‘representational critique’; that is, a willingness to understand “how meanings come to be inscribed and by whom, and how some come to be regarded as “right” or taken as given” (Macdonald, 2006, p. 3). She outlined three key focal points of the New Museology: to understand that the meanings of objects within museums are contextually situated and not inherent; to acknowledge that areas once seen as being outside the field of museums are today an intrinsic part thereof, such as entertainment and commercialism; and to comprehend how museums and their exhibitions are understood by visitors and other members of the community. These points of emphasis demonstrated the shifting ideas around meaning; that museums and their objects do not have fixed and bounded meanings, but contextual and contingent ones.

By 1990, the Smithsonian Institution, in collaboration with the Rockefeller Foundation, had organised two conferences that brought together academics and museum professionals from around the world, with the purpose of discussing the future aims of museums, the needs of the communities in which they’re situated, and how to address the poetics and politics of exhibiting at the end of the 20th Century (Karp et al., 1992; Karp & Lavine, 1991). These conferences resulted in two seminal collections of essays,6 which represent a snapshot of timely debates and the plurality of perspectives. On the one hand, arguments were made for the value of the more traditional, object-centric methods of the museum: how offering up an object for looking creates a ‘museum effect’, turning all objects into art (Alpers, 1991, p. 26). On the other hand, the very ways in which objects were imbued with meaning was more closely examined: they were acknowledged as having a connection to their original context and purpose, as being mediated through the interpretation

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4 Looking more specifically at New Museology has enabled me to gain valuable insights into the wider field of exhibiting, but I would like to acknowledge that it is not only within the walls of the museum that difficult exhibiting occurs. Organisations, such as PROOF, that design exhibitions both independently of and in collaboration with museums, can draw on the expert knowledge of the New Museology field, and in turn, also contribute to it. For example, see Wahlin and Kahn (2015).

5 The term ‘multimodal’ is used within this research to refer to the various modes of communication that apply in a social semiotic sense; that is, communication can be achieved via a range of semiotic resources, including colour, text, moving images, etc. Kress (2010) explains that “multimodality is the normal state of human communication” and that “Writing and image and colour lend themselves to doing different kinds of semiotic work, each has its own distinct potentials for meaning...” (Kress 2010, pp. 1).

6 The first collection, Exhibiting Cultures: The poetics and politics of museum display, was edited by Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (1991). The second collection of essays, Museums and Communities: The politics of public culture, was edited by Ivan Karp, Steven D. Lavine and Christine Mullen Kreamer (1992).
of museum curators, and to be understood through the lens of the cultural context of the viewer (Baxandall, 1991). What also developed was an urgency to recognise the museum as a ‘contested arena’, in which the control over the visual display of identities and experiences was questioned by a wider range of stakeholders than ever before (Karp, 1991b). James Clifford, in his essay, ‘Contact Zones’ highlighted an important shift within museums that went beyond the display of artifacts, to the function of museums as places that tell stories in a Western-centric way. The complexity of telling the stories of Indigenous people, and of them being told in a way that would satisfy the community represented, became fraught with tension (Clifford, 1997).

Clifford called for a democratisation of the museum space, and an expansion of the range of things that could happen within their settings in terms of arts, cultures, and traditions. The very right of the museum to collect and display artifacts came under wider and intense scrutiny, leading to a call for some objects, such as human remains and other cultural and religious artifacts, to be repatriated back to where they originated. The trophies of the colonialists became the stuff of hot debate (‘British Museum returns human remains to Australian Aborigines,’ 2011; Curtis, 2012; Des Griffin & Paroissien, 2011; Fforde, 2009; Fowler Williams, Espenlaub, & Monge, 2016; Kaplan, 2006; New Scientist, 2008; Rassool, 2015; Simpson, 2009; Wilson, 2009).

By the mid-1990s, the doors to the museum field were well and truly open to a wide range of scholars whose studies expanded the field alongside their museology counterparts. This marked another departure from the old, which often favoured narratives from a singular perspective in order to construct myths of nationhood (Coombes, 2012; Kaplan, 2006; Macdonald, 2012; Preziosi, 2012). Instead, the new began exploring the benefits and challenges of providing visitors with multi-perspective narratives. In what can be seen as a quite logical progression, ‘voice’, according to Steven Lavine (1991, p. 151), ‘emerged as a crucial issue in the creation of exhibitions.’ The term ‘voice’ referred to those represented in, those who visited and those who created exhibitions. The concepts of narrative and voice were connected to the growing need for museums to re-evaluate their relationships to the communities they were situated in, and was an important way for them to address their relevance alongside the social policy issues of the time, including the problem of exclusion (Crooke, 2006; Sandell, 2012). In connection with these, access to the museum—its spaces, experts and authority—also came under the microscope.

Museums were no longer considered to be a central authority in the creation of representations of people and their histories and cultures. Sociologists, for example, raised questions regarding access to the museum for marginalised groups, noting that the criticism museums began to receive from various social discourses resulted in the need for an institutional recognition of ‘the plurality and flux of identities’ (Bennett, 1995; Fyfe, 2006, p. 39). There was a growing imperative for museums to provide access to Indigenous experts and other members of the community, reflecting not only a growing body of work in areas such as postcolonialism, feminism and queer theory in the social sciences, but also regarding the experiences of people, their cultures and communities (Arthur, 2009; Autry, 2013; Deepwell, 2006; Hall, 1997a; Kaplan, 2006; Kelly, Cook, & Gordon, 2006; Lidchi, 1997; Porter, 2012; Wilson, 2009; Young, 2006). Tony Bennett (2006b, p. 263), who called this ‘civic seeing’, argued that the function of museums as civic institutions inform both the manner in which things are arranged, and also the wider conditions that influence the practices of looking. As a consequence, they can have a profound effect on the distinction between ‘citizens’ and ‘non-citizens’.

The issue of access is also linked to notions of power, and fields such as Cultural Studies began analysing how power played out within the museum through the lens of representation, or the ‘poetics’ (Lidchi, 1997) of display. Cultural Studies scholars recognised that the mimetic nature of the museum was a particularly useful means of understanding power struggles within society as they ‘materialise cultural and historical differences’ found within the communities they serve (Guntarik, 2009;...
Hall, 1997b; Lidchi, 1997; R. Mason, 2006, p. 20; Schorch, 2013). Mason makes the astute point that the interpretation and display of cultures is interpretive, and therefore these representations are never ideologically neutral, but always political. As such, understanding both the poetics and politics of display is necessary in order to gain a deeper understanding of the appropriateness of representational displays (R. Mason, 2006).

This complexity highlighted by New Museology also placed new demands on visitors, who were being asked to consider a wider range of voices, and rather than being lead to a particular conclusion, were increasingly challenged to construct their own meanings from exhibitions that attempted a broader and more critical representation of culture, people and events (Lindauer, 2006). New museology developed a focus on individuals and groups who attend museums, and the field of museum visitor studies in particular evolved rapidly as a somewhat controversial but energetic field. It gained a legitimacy through its investigation of the social uses of culture in relation to ‘the context of issues of identity and the politics of diaspora and difference’ (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006, p. 362). These questions required museums to review their very purpose through the lens of their audiences—a far cry from the museum’s origins of conservation and collection (Abt, 2006). There was a desire to understand visitor behaviour in more depth, and research not only explored visitor interactions with exhibitions for communication, learning and marketing purposes (Mencarelli, Marteaux, & Pulh, 2010), but also began framing the visitor as ‘active’, and explored the ‘affective and embodied dimensions of the visitor experience as well as at the cognitive and ideational’ (Macdonald, 2007, p. 149). Visitor studies found crossovers with education studies, which investigated how visitors interacted with, made meaning and learned from exhibitions. Pedagogical models, such as constructivist learning, framed the visitor as an active participant in their own education (Hein, 1998), and a large number of valuable studies emerged, often with accompanying and useful case studies across a wide range of exhibition genres (Dierking, Ellenbogen, & Falk, 2004; Falk, 1997, 2006; Falk & Storksdieck, 2005; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999, 2007; Krauss, 1999).

Although at times the shift from the old to the new museology was erratic, complex and controversial, it sparked a neoteric momentum in exhibition narrative development. From a focus on the display of objects that upheld the ideas of nationhood, great deeds and heroism through a singular narrative, there emerged an interest in presenting to the public a multiplicity of narratives and voices, addressing the more difficult questions of human relationships and their potential for aggression and competing motivations (Bennett, 1995; R. I. Simon, 2011), the role of museums in creating notions of citizenship, particularly in relation to the representations of war (Winter, 2008, 2012), the representation of and providing access to marginalised members of the community, and the inclusion of difficult histories. This shift, now 30-odd years in the making, has resulted in significant changes to curatorial practices within museums. However, it has not been without its political quicksand, as the creation and infant years of the ‘new museum’, the National Museum of Australia (NMA), exemplifies.

2.3 New Museums: Social memory, narrative and the Australian ‘culture wars’

The [new] museums...are part of a complex field of heritage, where national economies meet global tourism, where cities brand themselves, where indigeneity articulates with colonialism, where exhibitionary technologies and pedagogies meet entertainment, where histories are fought over, and where local identities intersect with academic and popular knowledge, where objects and provenance are displayed and contested, where remembering and forgetting dance their endless dance.

– Healy & Witcomb (2006a)
2.3.1 New Museums and the NMA

The era between the 1990s and early 2000s saw the rise of the ‘new museum’: the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, the Museum of Sydney (MoS), the Melbourne Museum (MM) and the National Museum of Australia (NMA), among others, classify themselves as such. These institutions, which Chris Healy and Andrea Witcomb called ‘experiments in culture’ (Healy & Witcomb, 2006a, p. 01.01), emerged in a time of unprecedented change, particularly in the ‘new world’, where the postcolonial era was calling for a reimagining of the narratives of both personal and national identities. Tony Bennett, likening museums to a ‘civic laboratory’, argued that, in attempting to redeploy the objects of museums into new, civically-driven roles, there rose the need for frank and honest analysis that could unveil the ideological effects they have on ‘the real nature of the social relations [they] represent’ (Bennett, 2006a, p. 08.12). Greg McCarthy (2004b) explained that, in a postmodern and postcolonial world, the vision of museums as lying on an axis between modernism, imperialism and progress began to lose its favour. Dawn Casey, the first Director of the NMA, argued that this signalled a point of no return to the ‘grand, simple narrative of national progress…’ (Casey, 2003, p. 5). This reflected an increasing preference for pluralism within the museum field, and in new museums in particular, which both inspired those within the profession and challenged an increasingly sophisticated public (Bolton, 2003; Casey, 2003; Davison, 2003). Within this cultural climate in the museum sector, Australia was about to open its own national museum: but its first years would prove to be contested and highly controversial, due to the influence exerted by then Prime Minister, John Howard.

The idea of a national museum had first been raised in the Piggott Report of 1975, which recommended the creation of a social history museum that could examine and celebrate Australian history, culture and national identity (Davison, 2003; Piggott, 1975). However, it wasn’t taken up with any serious political fervour until, in 1996, John Howard became Prime Minister. Driven by an ideology based as much on his personal background as his political convictions, Howard began stacking the boards of national cultural institutions, such as the NMA, with those who shared his ideological view, particularly on Australian history (A. Bonnell & Crotty, 2008). ‘This is Howard’s empire,’ wrote Pamela Williams, in the Australian Financial Review, ‘and the men and women appointed to positions of power and influence across the country form a conservative river as deep as it is wide’ (2004, pp. 80-81). The council advising the government on the NMA’s development included Chairman Tony Staley (former Liberal Party Federal President), David Barnett (Howard’s authorised biographer and former journalist) and the conservative columnist and former Howard speech writer, Christopher Pearson. Of all the council members, only one, conservative historian John Hirst, had any experience in either the museum or history fields (A. Bonnell & Crotty, 2008; McCarthy, 2004a). In what would become known as the ‘culture’ or ‘history wars’ of the Howard era, the Prime Minister was adamant that the museum would not only become a celebration of Federation (the centenary of which coincided with its opening in 2001), but would lay down the narrative foundations of a version of Australian history that was unapologetic in its colonial origins, would bolster the ‘digger myth’, lay bare its scepticism of the Stolen Generations and Frontier Wars, and would wrap this up in terms that denounced ‘political correctness’. This was the time for Anglo-Saxon, white Australia to put aside feelings of guilt or shame, and put forward a version of the nation’s history that lauded the achievements of ‘mainstream’ Australia (A. Bonnell & Crotty, 2008; Grieves, 2003; McCarthy, 2004a). As Howard himself said, he believed that his role, and that of government, was: …to ensure that our history as a nation is not written definitely by those who take the view that Australians should apologise for most of it. This ‘black armband’ view of our past reflects a belief that most Australian history since 1788 has been little more than a disgraceful story of imperialism, exploitation, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. I take a very different view (Howard cited in, A. Bonnell & Crotty, 2008, p. 152).

However, as Dawn Casey quite aptly wrote, ‘the truth is rarely simple’ (Casey, 2003, p. 4). New museums such as the NMA, she explained, have their foundations in interpretation, which acknowledges that history is complex, the truth elusive and that perspectives differ. Critics who shared Howard’s modernist-linear ideology that the role of the national museum was to ‘celebrate, unify and inspire’ (Casey, 2003, p. 4) collided with the museum’s own mission statement of pluralist
interpretation (McCarthy, 2004b). One of the most outspoken of those critics was David Barnett, who in 2000, just before the NMA’s opening, called for a major review of its displays, arguing that many of its exhibits were politically correct or displayed ‘Marxist claptrap’ (A. Bonnell & Crotty, 2008, p. 160). Professor Graeme Davison from Monash University, who took on this first review, wrote that, ‘after carefully reviewing them, I found that almost none of his [Barnett’s] criticisms could be supported by reputable scholarship’ (Davison 2002, in Henderson, 2003). Davison’s report was not enough to silence the critics however, and in 2003, another review of the NMA’s exhibits was commissioned, this time headed by the self-titled ‘eclectic’ conservative, John Carroll (Henderson, 2003; McCarthy, 2004a). But if the conservatives supporting Howard’s vision, such as Quadrant’s Keith Windschuttle,10 were, like Barnett and Pearson, hoping for a better outcome, they were to be disappointed. The Carroll report found no ‘systematic problem’ or ‘cultural or political bias’ (A. Bonnell & Crotty, 2008, p. 160), and that:

The Panel’s criterion that the [NMA] should present a sense of the mosaic of everyday life and its more ordinary stories has largely been realised. So too has the Museum presented with some success the history of the indigenous peoples in the Gallery of First Australians. In both cases, the Museum has rightly earned the praise of the general public, and of academic and museum specialists (Carroll, 2003, p. 67).

The case of the NMA is an excellent example of how ideological frameworks can play out within the museum space, and why issues of representation—of people, of myths, and of cultural practices—become so invested in. New Museums, based on an interpretive framework of pluralist narratives, can challenge and inspire us, but they can also challenge and threaten those who would submit to the public a ‘modernist-linear’ narrative based on myths that all too often continue to exclude many within our communities. Importantly, New Museums have led the way in the display of difficult knowledge, and these will always garner both praise and censure. As we become more willing to open ourselves up to the darker parts of our histories—to learn from the mistakes of the past, to nurture our empathy for the suffering of others and develop a vision for the future—we need to be mindful of the way pedagogical affect is utilised as a tool for education and activism. As difficult exhibitions increase in number, understanding their nature is not only important for curators and stakeholders, but also for the designers who are responsible for the representations of people and their stories. The next section of this chapter will examine the terms ‘difficult knowledge’ and ‘difficult exhibition’ in more detail.

2.4 Defining ‘difficult knowledge’

The term ‘difficult knowledge’ was first coined by Deborah Britzman, who recognised that ‘studying the experiences and the traumatic residuals of genocide, ethnic hatred, aggression and forms of state-sanctioned—and hence legal—social violence’ has implications both for the theory of educators and how such content becomes pedagogical (Britzman, 1998, p. 117). She expands upon this in a later study with Alice Pitt (2003), describing difficult knowledge as a concept that signifies both the ‘representations of social traumas in curriculum and the individual’s encounters with them in pedagogy’ (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 755). They point out that both philosophical and pedagogical perspectives of difficult knowledge assume that difficult knowledge includes ‘a kernel of trauma in the very capacity to know’. Critical feminist and LGBTQI theorists, they explained, have focused on the learner’s capacity to critically engage with both the knowledge of social traumas and the question of equity, social justice, democracy and human rights (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 756). Pedagogical theorists
have understood difficult knowledge as also signifying the problem of learning from social discord in a manner that opens teachers and students to understanding their ethical obligations (Pitt & Britzman, 2003).

Breaking this down, they pose two questions in relation to difficult knowledge which are useful for understanding its nature and its representations: firstly, that what makes knowledge difficult is its content. Secondly, they ask what it means to represent and narrate difficult knowledge. Pitt and Britzman suggest that a ‘crisis of representation’ occurs when we come into contact with difficult knowledge within pedagogy, where the knowledge outside unseats that which already exists within. In other words, our current beliefs are based on a combination of our current knowledge and the emotional significance we place on it; when new knowledge unseats the old, it also throws into conflict our beliefs and the attached emotional significance we invest in them.

To explain further, they employ three psychoanalytic terms that help us to understand the steps that occur between the moment that a person first comes into contact with difficult knowledge, through to the time that they come to understand it. Throughout these stages, they argue, understanding cannot be seen as a feature of experience, but rather a problem of symbolisation, which is not only a matter of naming the world and its objects, but is also a reflection of our capacity to use symbolic language to express what is emotionally significant for us. These three stages are referred to as ‘deferred action’, ‘transference’ and ‘symbolisation’.

‘Deferred action’ is a psychoanalytic concept that refers to how emotional significance and new ideas are created from past and present experiences: in the time of deferred action, the force of the event is felt before it is understood. The concept of deferred action helps us to frame learning about or from difficult knowledge as a complex and often convoluted process, one which is often fractured, or leads us beyond rationality. There is also the risk that learners will reject difficult knowledge: if what they feel, for example, is an overwhelming powerlessness or trauma, the compulsion might be to defer the conversion of feeling into understanding.

‘Transference’ occurs when past experiences arise as a result of coming into contact with new, difficult knowledge: for example, viewing the exhibit, Unearthed: Stories of Courage in the Face of Sexual Violence (Kahn, 2015), might act as a trigger for visitors who have directly or indirectly experienced sexual assault. The difficult knowledge they come into contact with brings about a transference between old and new knowledge. The emotional significance of previous experiences plays an important role in what happens when encountering new knowledge, particularly if it doesn’t support our current belief system.

The final stage outlined by Pitt and Britzman is ‘symbolisation’: that is, when there is a convergence of new knowledge, we attach an emotional significance to it, ‘name’ it, and then come to understand it (Pitt & Britzman, 2003).

Understanding the ‘push-pull’ effect of difficult knowledge poses an interesting question for this research: that the ‘kernel of trauma in the capacity to know’ difficult knowledge can also open people up to a greater understanding of social justice and human rights is an opportunity for communities to come to understand each other on a deeper level through the democratization of ‘voice’, and to enhance their agency to affect change. However, this comes about through the representations of those social traumas and people’s encounters with them. This is the territory in which ideology and affect come together: yes, there is a need to balance learning about social traumas with the agency and ethics that can affect change, but we need to be very clear about what that is. Once difficult knowledge is placed within the context of an exhibition, it’s important to draw tacit knowledge from a project’s creators and stakeholders into an explicit form in order to find a pathway towards balancing trauma with hope. I argue that this balance is essential if a project is to address the sensitivity required to represent people and their stories of trauma, on the one hand, and on the other, to present these to a public that engages with, learns from and comes to understand the content of the exhibition and their agency to effect the world beyond.
2.5 Difficult knowledge. Difficult exhibitions.

Although Pitt and Britzman were more specifically focused on encounters with difficult knowledge in pedagogy, their work has had significance for museum scholars and practitioners, particularly within the fields of Cultural Heritage and Memory Studies. This has manifested itself in the rapidly expanding body of literature that focuses on the display of difficult knowledge within exhibitions, and in this respect, provides a useful link between studies on difficult knowledge and the post New Museology context.

Cultural Heritage scholars have produced a wide range of studies on issues such as sites of remembrance, representation of communities and the repatriation of Indigenous artifacts and remains (Bennett, 2006a; Fforde, 2009; Healy, 2006; Message, 2006, 2013; Moser, 2010; Schorch, 2013; Simpson, 2009; Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996; Paul Williams, 2006; Wilson, 2009; Witcomb, 2003, 2006, 2013, 2015).

Memory scholars, branching from Education Studies, have explored the exhibition visitors’ complex relationship to ‘difficult knowledge’ (J. Bonnell & Simon, 2007; Garrett, 2011; R. I. Simon, 2011, 2014; Trofanenko, 2011; Zembylas, 2014). When combined, these two fields provide instructive overviews of the emergence of difficult exhibitions and their increasing importance within exhibiting.

Roger I. Simon’s studies on curatorial practice and social justice are seminal within the memory studies field, particularly his comparative studies of exhibitions that display difficult knowledge topics (Simon 2014; 2011). Cultural institutions, he argued, have shown an increasing willingness to display difficult knowledge related to loss and death, conflict and violence, and these ‘practices of remembrance’ (R. I. Simon, 2011, p. 432) have arguably become an important characteristic of exhibiting within contemporary museums.

Employing Pitt and Britzman’s term, Simon labelled these ‘difficult exhibitions’; that is, exhibitions that offer up difficult knowledge to visitors not only for the display of histories of trauma, violence and loss, but also the aftermath of such histories within the modern world. Simon and Bonnell (2007) define criteria for what might make an exhibition difficult: if an exhibition confronts the visitors’ expectations of museology and their own interpretive abilities; if it places upon a visitor a heavy burden of negative emotions, particularly if those emotions implicate some kind of familial, national or cultural complicity; and lastly, if the exhibition acts as a trigger for past experiences, heightening anxiety within visitors.

There are two further points that Simon raises about visitors’ contact with difficult knowledge: first, that it is like a ‘terrible gift’ that forces an expansion of the conceptual and emotional limitations of the present moment, destabilising our sense of self and our surety that we understand the world around us. Secondly, that curatorial decisions related to the display of such knowledge have deep implications for the relationship between thought and affect, or in other words, that they can have a deep and lasting impact on the visitor’s belief that they can do something about their new knowledge after they leave the exhibit.

In a series of case studies, Simon explored the contextually-contingent nature of visual images, and how, as the meaning-making process is contingent upon their social situatedness, ‘an image must be understood as integral to the event of its appearance, an event that is always a conjunctural occurrence in the world’ (R. I. Simon, 2014, p. 41). In one such study, he examined the different curatorial approaches taken by the Chicago Historical Society (CHS) and the Andy Warhol Museum (AWM) when they displayed the exhibition, Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photographs in America (R. I. Simon, 2011, 2014). In examining these two exhibitions, Simon explored through critical narrative study the ways in which public history exhibitions differ in their attempts to capitalise on what Walter Benjamin called the ‘historical index of images’; that is, an image is not only a historical referent to the time in which it was created, but is also a product of the present moment in which it is being read (Benjamin cited in, R. I. Simon, 2014, pp. 41-42). Both the CHS and AWM drew from the Allen and Littlefield collection of 140 photographs taken at lynchings in the United States from 1880 to 1960, and both recognised that these were not images that the public would prefer to see:

...there was an acute curatorial recognition that the photographs were an excess not fully containable within the exhibition’s narrative. This meant working with the unsayable and unimaginable contained by each image yet also against both, making the images sayable and imaginable ‘in spite of it all’ (R. I. Simon, 2014, p. 43).
However, Simon’s study revealed that each exhibition placed the images into an institutionally-preferred context of seeing, thinking and feeling. For example, in the case of the CHS exhibition, 51 of the 55 victims displayed were identified, while only 21 of the 92 shown at the AWM were named. The CHS chose to include extensive historical context to the exhibit, but not too many images that it became overwhelming for visitors. On the other hand, the AWM’s approach aimed to intensify the experience of viewing the images, leaving visitors without the safety of historicity, but instead the confronting and violent reality of their content. Both exhibitions aimed to limit the possibility of visitors leaving with a sense of only impotent agency: both had sections on anti-lynching activism and a place for visitors to add their thoughts. In each case, however, the institutions implemented different approaches for the integration of image and text, as well as the selection of texts, particular images and associated artifacts, and these in turn framed visitor engagement. Interestingly, Simon’s study also includes interviews with other members of the exhibition team, including a volunteer/public forum supervisor and a designer. This revealed the important role, for example, the designer played in the contextualization of images. When asked why some of the smaller images in the collection were not blown up, they responded by saying, ‘We thought that [the images] were intense enough as they were, and we wanted to draw people in to look at the images and read the labels as opposed to amplifying the horror’ (R. I. Simon, 2014, p. 90). In comparing the two institutions’ approaches, Simon reveals the complex task of creating a difficult exhibition, its narrative structure and the ‘terrible gift’ they can be for audiences. He also raises the idea of hope as being part of this gift: traces of the past are brought into the present, creating a ‘fissure’ within a person’s historical context. The difficult knowledge of the past can not only help us by building capacity for critically engaging with our present, but also to reimagine our still-yet-to-be-determined futures.

As museums have increasingly taken up the challenge of controversial topics, visitors are also being invited to open themselves up to learning through emotional affect, or what Cultural Heritage scholar Andrea Witcomb coined the ‘the pedagogy of feeling’. Witcomb uses this term to describe contemporary exhibition forms, and argues that these ‘staged affective encounters’ are an essential element in contemporary museum strategies in order to create opportunities for introspective reflections, and embody the performative element that educates and invokes a sense of citizenry and political engagement within the public sphere (Witcomb, 2015, p. 322). It’s a useful framework through which representation, voice, access and community can converge, and help us to not only understand the political ideologies that underpin them, but also, as exhibition creators, to consider carefully the possible range of emotional challenges we are asking visitors to undertake.

This has been shown to have particular importance for New Museums, which centre on (often living) social history (Healy & Witcomb, 2006b), and sites of memory, some of which have seen the development of their own museums, such as the former high school-turned-prison, S-21 (Toul Sleng) in Cambodia (R. I. Simon, 2014; The Killing Fields Museum of Cambodia, n.d), the Kigali Genocide Memorial in Rwanda (Aegis Trust, n.d) and the controversial 9/11 Memorial Museum in New York (Hennes, 2014; Johnson, 2014; Kennicott, 2014; National September 11 Memorial & Museum, 2017). Sites of memory rose in interest within the research of Cultural Heritage Studies, which explored the ways in which these sites can be highly contested by the communities and other stakeholders who lay claim to its narrative. This is particularly so when they mark a site of genocide, a battle of war, or an atrocity or mass murder (Cadot, 2010; Forgan, 2005; Guntarik, 2009; King, 2006; Sodaro, 2013; Trofimenko, 2011; Violi, 2012). These sites also raised new and challenging questions in regards to what John Tunbridge and Gregory

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11 In 2015, I visited the 9/11 Memorial Museum, a day after my colleague from PROOF: Media for Social Justice, Leora Kahn, and I met with Director of Thinc Design, Tom Hennes, in his New York studio. Thinc Design was originally commissioned to design the exhibition, and we discussed with Hennes his firm’s role in the design. The exhibition, which included the need for exit signs to be visible at all times, and to create an exhibition that reduces the possibility of retracing visitors, particularly those who were in New York on the day of 9/11 (Tom Hennes, personal communication 2015). In the late stages of the design process, the director of the museum, Alice Greenwald, brought in a new designer, Dave Layman, to address what she said was a design that ‘was creating distance rather than pulling you into the story... (we) weren’t feeling what we were hoping to feel’ (Johnson, 2014). Layman was put in charge of the 25,000 square feet of space right at the bottom of the museum, which tells the story of the actual day itself. Of creating a visitor’s experience he said, “We can’t recreate the memories, but we can invoke them for people who remember and document them for people who don’t” (Kleinman, 2015). Therein lies the challenge of designing emotional affect and the controversy it can court. Philip Kennicott’s review of the museum in The Washington Post is one that reflected my own experiences of visiting its lower areas in particular, and although he failed to separate the work of Thinc with the later work of Layman’s design, his description of what the museum is asking visitors to feel is illuminating: ‘Repetition is the essential thing: We suffer the trauma again and again in a way that inflates our sense of participation in it. This isn’t history, it’s spectacles, and it engulfs us, makes us a part of it, animating our emotions as if we were there, again, watching it all unfold’ (Kennicott, 2014). The experience of the museum for me was one that left me agitated and angry, but for the wrong reasons. It was not because the lives of so many were taken by a few, but that I suddenly found myself engulfed in a room of noise and confusion without being able to find an exit. I felt also that there was a deep betrayal of the people who, in the last moments of their lives, with no say in the matter, had their dignity stripped as images of them jumping from the buildings were projected onto the walls of a dark alcove, like a macabre slide show. The 9/11 Memorial Museum is an interesting example of the interplay between stakeholder ideology and design, and a stark reminder that designers have a responsibility not only to the living visitor, but also to the memory of the dead.
Ashworth called the dissonant nature of heritage, because although heritage, by its very nature, can court controversy and discord, difficult sites of memory can amplify this through immediate and emotionally charged associations (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996 in Message & Witcomb, 2015, p. xxxvi).

The term ‘affect’ has been defined as being ‘a transpersonal capacity which a body has to be affected (through affection) and to affect (as the result of modifications)’ (Anderson 2006, pp. 735, in Waterton, 2018). The emerging field of Critical Heritage studies has shown a keen interest in understanding the role of emotion and affect, and in doing so, questioned the preference of objectivity and rationalism within the archaeological and cultural heritage fields (Dudley, 2012; Smith, 2015; Smith & Campbell, 2015). Indeed, it can be argued that, in viewing emotional responses – including nostalgia – as the antithesis to objectivity and rationality, understanding how we learn through emotions has been overlooked for too long. While it is not the purpose of this study to traverse the critical heritage field with the depth that a discipline-specific study ought, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge its contribution to understanding the role that affect plays within the ‘cultural performance of meaning-making’ (Smith & Campbell, 2015, p. 443), and the nature of the relationship between the semiotic and the affective: whether they are separate, connected to, or intricately intertwined with the meaning making process. This study acknowledges the complexity of this debate, and that emotional affect can most certainly result from forces other than the semiotic (such as nature, for example). However, the focus of this study is not to examine all the ways in which affect can happen, but the role of the designer in relation to the interpretation and creation of the semiotic (the ‘double-ended interpretation’ of design). Within this context, it is impossible to separate the semiotic from the possibility of meaning making through emotional affect, as well as the cognitive and sensorial, and that these are always connected to the cultural and social. The interplay between these and the semiotic resources of an exhibition is the ‘stuff’ of interest to design, in particular the notion of how individual and social memory are both ‘mediated and reconstructed’ (Wertch, 2002, in Smith & Campbell, 2015, p. 542). This acknowledges that visitors, like designers, are also active authors in the meaning-making process in this multi-faceted way (Macdonald, 2007; MacLeod, Dodd, & Duncan, 2015; Witcomb, 2015). Critical Heritage scholars, Emma Waterton and Steven Watson (2014) called this interplay the ‘semiotic landscape’ of heritage tourism, one that is encountered by ‘thinking-feeling’ subjects’ (Waterton, 2018). They employed the term to expand what constitutes the semiotic, including more-than-representational theorisations, and bringing together concepts such as immediacy, performance, engagement, feelings and emotions with language, discourse, visuality, representation and signification— or all those things generally assumed to sit within the remit of ‘semiosis’. The ‘semiotic landscape’ points to the interweaving of thoughts, habits, discourse, affect and emotion, and brings together the analysis of both semiosis and affect. In the exhibition context, the concept of the ‘semiotic landscape’ is not only a useful concept with which to link the representational and the more-than-representational. As the very existence of semiotic resources make an exhibition possible, the concept is arguably central to the role of the designer.

It’s important to emphasise that difficult knowledge expressed through exhibitions and sites of memory play an important role for communities, particularly for those who find validation in the telling of their stories of traumatic experiences to the wider public (Chynoweth, 2014; Kahn, 2015; Message, 2013). However, central to this must always be affect: if guilt, blame and shame take the place of inspiration, reconciliation and healing, the result can be no more than a perpetuation of the stereotypes, otherisation and segregation already existing within communities. Finding the balance between telling difficult stories that leave visitors with what J. Bonnell and Simon (2007, p. 68) called ‘a terrible gift’, which implicate visitors in the necessity of a response, and developing an empathy that can lead to positive action within their everyday lives is the central challenge to achieving an effective ‘pedagogy of feeling’ that is appropriate for an individual project. This raises an important challenge to those who create exhibitions: while visitor affect is important to understand, it is almost always more fully understood through visitor studies based on visitor surveys. Notwithstanding the value of post-project assessment, it is often too little, too late for designers (Roberts, 2015). As we move into the ‘third phase’, or ‘Post New Museology’ era, one in which difficult exhibitions play an increasingly important role in museums and beyond, understanding the ideological framework of the
exhibition stakeholders can provide valuable information for the exhibition’s curators and designers, and can act as a guide post for designers. The next section looks more closely at Post New Museology and its call for theory and practice to come together. With a growing number of difficult exhibitions within and outside of museums, there is a wealth of potential for design to play a larger role within the planning and execution of exhibition projects.

2.6 The ‘third phase’: Post-New Museology and the role of design

As outlined above, much of the literature that has informed the complex and multidisciplinary field of New Museology has focused on the politics of representation, or the cultural practices of collecting and display. Message and Witcomb (2015), writing from what they call the ‘third phase’ (or Post-New Museology) era, explain that while current museum studies maintain an interest in social justice, community building and public policy-oriented approaches, they are now charged with addressing a gap that exists within New Museology literature that grew from the field’s splintered disciplinary nature, as well as its three main theoretical arteries: museological-based publications that focus on policy and practice; disciplinary-specific debates that focus on the policy and practice gap between a discipline and the museum (i.e. anthropology); and cultural studies-based research that focuses on museums as the mimetic locations through which debates on power, representation and diversity can be argued (Parezo cited in Message & Witcomb, 2015). What is emerging within Post New Museology are questions regarding how museums contribute to the shaping of public consciousness (Dahlgren & Hermes, 2015; Hein, 2012; Janes, 2012; Message, 2013), how their spaces can be further developed through practice as sites of critical reflection (Butler, 2015; Schorch, 2013, 2015), and whether this is extended to a reflexive analysis of existing cultural practices (Message & Witcomb, 2015). There is also a growing consensus that meaning-making and knowledge production by visitors is multi-faceted: that is, it is cognitive, sensory and affective (Macdonald, 2007; MacLeod et al., 2015; N. Simon, 2015). Alongside this has been the steady increase in difficult exhibiting, not only appearing as a growing number of memorial spaces by and for communities, but also within the scientific arena, for example, where climate change is also linked to notions of citizenship, social justice and human rights (Cameron, 2016). Many scholars and professionals are now arguing that while the work of the New Museology era has been necessary and valuable, it has come at the expense of professional practice, and as a result, the development of theory through practice (MacCarthy, 2015). To date, the majority of these criticisms have come from the same disciplines that have already dominated the field, heritage studies and museum studies in particular. However, it is within these gaps of New Museology that there is fertile ground for designers, and although practice-led design research related to the museum has been emerging more recently as a ‘concrete, knowable and energetic’ field (MacLeod et al., 2015, p. 315), there is arguably much more for practice-led design research to do in terms of applying what designers ‘do, think and know’ to the interdisciplinary field of exhibiting (Kimbell, 2011, 2012), and in particular, how designers apply their cognitive, sensorial and emotional understanding to interpretation and the semiotic. This is necessary if design is to shift from the sidelines of practice and theory and take a more substantial place within the Post New Museology era.

As MacLeod et al. (2015, p. 316) argue, despite the fact that design has the potential to ‘reach across different ways of knowing and working’, museums have all too often placed design at the periphery of exhibiting practices, despite the very strategies of design and design thinking being implemented as a means of supporting community engagement and curatorial planning (Macdonald, 2007; MacLeod et al., 2015; N. Simon, 2010). This highlights the disparity between what is often the assigned role of professional designers within exhibition projects (Roberts, 2015) versus the value that is increasingly being placed on methods born from design by other exhibition professionals. Participatory design, for example, has been implemented within many museum projects over the last 15 years, and is based on the idea that cultural institutions can be places where visitors can create, share, and connect with each other around content. It invites non-museum community members to be part of the shaping of exhibitions, while also incorporating design techniques that factor visitors as active, meaning-making participants (N. Simon, 2010). Simon argues that participatory design, like all design techniques, is a strategy for addressing specific problems. In the case of museums, these include 5 common points of dissatisfaction: that they are
irrelevant institutions in people's lives; that they never change, so there's no need to return; the authoritative voice of the museum leaves no room for the visitor's voice or point of view; that they're not creative spaces that allow for self-expression or opportunities for visitors to make a contribution to history, science and art; and they are not comfortable places for visitors to talk to friends and strangers about ideas. The desired outcome of participatory design is that, unlike the more traditional institution-to-visitor platform, participatory projects support multi-directional content experiences, and are thus less likely to achieve a consistent visitor experience (Figure 1). Instead, the institution acts as a platform that 'connects different users who act as content creators, distributors, consumers, critics, and collaborators' (N. Simon, 2010, p. 3).

In a review of empirical studies on participatory design projects within museums, Mygind, Hällman, and Bentsen (2015) argue that the success of participatory design depends on a range of factors: if museums are conducive or discouraging of participation; if there is a failure to communicate across lay and professional language; the impact of the everyday workflow of the museum; the level of control maintained by the museum; the characteristics of the individuals participating; and the management of disputes.12 However, in all but one case examined by Mygind et al., the role of designers was unclear. In that one case, the teenage participants 'had six weeks to themselves in forming ideas and creating a mock-up exhibit before the designers were introduced to the project' (Mygind et al., 2015, p. 128). Perhaps unsurprisingly, a dispute between the designers and the participants resulted (which had to be mediated by an anthropologist), and arguably, the young participants lost a significant opportunity to learn from the designers' expertise through a process of collaboration. Whether or not joint ownership of the product of such collaboration could reduce conflict is not for debate here, but it does beg the question: if the value of design strategies has been recognised by museum institutions and within the production of other cultural events (Calosci, 2017), then why are designers not being actively engaged in projects from the outset more often?

This question has also been raised within the field of interpretation design, which, according to Toni Roberts, 'can be defined as the planned creation of environments that communicate ideas, support visitor understanding of object displays and contribute to meaningful visitor experiences' (Roberts, 2015, p. 379). Interpretation design practices also span areas outside of museums, such as zoos, botanical gardens and other interpretive centres. Roberts argues, however, that the field is not only under-examined in relation to its methods, management and outputs, but is also out of sync with mainstream museum practices, which often have little professional understanding of design, nor experience in its management. As fewer museums maintain in-house design teams, relying instead on outsourcing, there are new challenges both for exhibition teams and designers that require a rethink in order for the efficacy of design to reach its potential. Some key issues include the timing of designer engagement, as well as other stakeholders' understanding of what the designer's role is and can be (Roberts, 2015). As with many design disciplines, interpretive design practice is a collaborative process with other professionals (Woodward, 2009). However, the designer's intrinsic value to exhibition projects has been underrepresented in New Museology in particular. This is despite a smattering of studies that have argued the case with great insight, such as that by Alice Lake-Hammond and Noel Waite, on the contribution of design to the Museum of New Zealand/Te Papa Tongarewa (Lake-Hammond & Waite, 2010). They argued that, although museum exhibitions had undergone significant changes over half a century, design had been little acknowledged.

12 It’s interesting to note that this study had a narrow search scope based on museum studies-based journals, which omitted design research journals.
within the field as being valuable to exhibiting practices. They further argued that design can bridge the gap between disciplines, and that the role of designers and their capacity to frame problems and connect them to the needs of potential users can help to reshape not only visitor experiences, but also museums at an institutional level (Lake-Hammond & Waite, 2010). Lake-Hammond and Waite’s observations were a breath of fresh air among the more traditional bounded volumes dedicated to exhibition design, many of which are still written for a curatorial audience (Dernie, 2006; Lord & Piacente, 2014; Rouette & Museums Australia, 2010; Serrell, 1996). While not discounting their value in providing an overview of exhibiting practices, they tend to categorise designers as being ‘Individuals or firms [that] are hired to provide creative three-dimensional, graphic, lighting and media design’ (Lord & Piacente, 2014, p. 238), and often contain what many professional designers would consider rudimentary information on aspects of design, such as typographic legibility (Locker, 2011; Serrell, 1996).13

In another study, now a decade old, Sharon Macdonald linked visitor studies to exhibition design, framing experiences as being related to media, sociality and space.14 Macdonald argues that design plays a significant role in the creation of exhibitions that encourage collaboration and meaningful interactivity, and makes note of case studies that have investigated ‘hybrid artifacts’ that support visitors’ ability to manipulate physical and digital material. Macdonald’s link between visitor studies and exhibition design provides yet another example of the breadth of potential for the expanded role of designers within exhibition teams. However, it has not actually been undertaken by a practicing designer, and highlights the need for a more extensive body of work from the design field on what designers do, think and know (Kimbell, 2011, 2012), as much of the knowledge that is generated by designers is all too often situated within practice, rather than reflected within studies dedicated to understanding its complexity (Roberts, 2015).

13 Pam Locker’s chapter on exhibition graphics provides a word of warning for exhibition ‘designers’: ‘In an exhibition, the design of the graphics and three-dimensional components should be inextricably linked. It is tempting to separate out graphics as a discipline, but exhibition designers do this at their peril’ (Locker, 2011, p. 110). While wholeheartedly agreeing with her statement, I also argue that it is the strategic thinking across the field of design that links its various disciplines.

14 Macdonald defines ‘media’ as being ‘any of the display forms used in an exhibition’ (Macdonald, 2007, p. 153). This includes, for example, cashed objects, display panels, and both television and interactive screens, and their connotative meaning potential based on various affordances. Her term ‘sociality’ refers to the fact that visiting a museum is a social event. Both Macdonald (2007) and Skytsgaard, Andersen and Krige (2016) make reference to the nature of learning in the museum as being intrinsically linked to this sociality—that people participate in interactions that are physical and dialogic. Lastly, Macdonald’s use of the term ‘space’ is used to explain how people ‘negotiate their way through museums and galleries’ and how this can have a sizeable impact on ‘how they relate to and interpret an exhibition’ (Macdonald, 2007, p. 157). Macdonald’s terms can all be housed within a social semiotic, multimodal framework, and will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 3.

The participatory and interpretation design disciplines both exemplify the complex nature of design as a field, and both have crossovers with Communication Design in terms of strategic thinking. Communication Design has been defined as being the:

...practice of planning and shaping a message in content, form and delivery...[as it] is about message and effect, it focuses on touching people through transmission of ideas. Therefore, Communication Design comes with a responsibility to compassionately understand the recipient’s existing perceptions and systems of beliefs, while designing solutions that fulfill the sender’s goals in sharing his/her idea (Luminant Design LLC, 2014).

Within practice, Communication Designers are also focused on problem solving, but more specifically on how to craft effective ways of communicating ideas to an audience, sharing ideas, educating and persuading. It can encompass a range of design practices, including, but not limited to, information design and information architecture. In terms of exhibition design, it can often encompass the creation of labels and other graphic elements, but in practice it is often much broader than that. Within my own practice as a Communication Designer, difficult exhibition projects have presented a unique set of challenges, and the need to understand how to communicate an organisation’s aims have required more than a consideration for legible typography, harmonious colour schemes and graphic forms, particularly as disparate elements. For example, travelling exhibitions are still situated within a ‘space’, but as that space changes from one location to another, it is a more unpredictable element to factor into a project’s planning. Additionally, it can take on associated meanings that are not initially obvious: when The Rescuers travels to a post-conflict region, for example, space is not only physical, but cultural and political (Wahlin & Kahn, 2015).15 That there is a need to contextualise exhibits within a critical, historical framework has been the subject of much discussion within the museological field, and understanding these debates is important for designers (Dale-Hallett, Garland, & Fraser, 2015; Gardner, 2015; Message & Witcomb, 2015). It also highlights the need for a framework that can make explicit potential meanings, not only of an exhibition’s modes of materiality, such as labels, objects, space and multimedia, but also the ‘gaps’ between these and how, combined, they can generate affective, cognitive

15 For more information, see the section on The Rescuers ArtWalk in Chapter 6.
and sensorial knowledge (Bennett, 2006b; Witcomb, 2015). Embodied and performative, exhibitions generate ‘significant forms of knowledge...based on individual and collective forms of memory, attachments to place, and community’ (Witcomb, 2015, p. 325). In order to do this, however, designers need to be brought into projects much sooner than is the current standard practice, and conversely, need to contribute their situated knowledge to the Post New Museology field. In doing so, designers can be part of the process of changing professional norms within the museum and exhibiting field.

2.7 Conclusion

While this chapter has focused predominantly on examining the work of scholars from the museum sector, it should be noted that museums are not the only organisations who exhibit. Along with public institutions such as libraries, private organisations, such as non-profit or non-government organisations, are increasingly investing in exhibiting.16 Organisations such as PROOF have taken up the challenge of displaying difficult knowledge topics as part of education, social justice and human rights programs. These organisations, often low on funds, time poor and with limited human resources, have a specific set of challenges that are quite different to the museum. While this will be discussed more specifically in Chapter 6, it should be noted that they can also be informed by the lessons of the museum sector, engage with its professionals, and move beyond the disciplinary restraints identified by Message and Witcomb (2015) to work in a meta-disciplinary way. This is also the nature of design and its approach to strategic thinking and problem solving, and encouraging organisations to embrace designers as well as design-as-strategy could prove to be a vital element in the Post New Museology’s aim of bringing together theory and practice.

Some wider issues related to exhibition design sit outside of the scope of this study, but nonetheless are deserving of more in-depth investigation in future research. For example, studies on interaction design, found most predominantly in relation to science exhibits, can also contribute to difficult exhibit design in terms of narrative development and visitor engagement, and play a potentially significant role in the ‘pedagogy of affect’. Additionally, more research needs to be undertaken in the field of visitor studies that includes feedback on design elements. However, it is the purpose of this chapter to provide an overview of the contemporary history of exhibiting in order to understand the current and potential role of design as a problem solving and strategic tool. This supports the development of the CHaSSMM Model of Analysis as a tool for Communication Design, and to understand how such knowledge can inform the design of difficult exhibitions. The following chapter provides an in-depth explanation of the CHaSSMM Model of Analysis and the theoretical approaches that have contributed to its development.

16 Other examples of non-profit organisations that use difficult knowledge exhibitions as education programs include Courage to Care (Australia) and private museum enterprises, such as the Jewish Holocaust Museum in Melbourne and the Jewish Holocaust Museum in Sydney.
3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines a propositional theoretical framework, the CHaSSMM (Critical Hermeneutic and Social Semiotic Multimodal) Model of Analysis, which addresses a significant gap in theory related to the practice of difficult exhibitions, as well models of best practice for designers. I have developed the CHaSSMM Model in response to the research questions of this study and to specifically address the project-based challenges that I have experienced within my own professional practice of designing difficult exhibitions, as well as in my observations of the work of other professionals in this field. Its aim is to complement the designerly approach to problem solving that encourages an open-ended method of questioning and the possibility of new knowledge production, or, as design theorist Håkan Edeholt explains it, “that the innovation potential in design is to propose how things “might be”” (Edeholt cited in, Jahnke, 2012, p. 36). CHaSSMM is also built on the bricolage methodology used within this research, which encourages designers to explore a variety of methods that support practice-led design research (Yee & Bremner, 2011). I have taken my cue from Paul Ricouer’s notion that interpretation is an activity that needs to be checked and challenged against our own beliefs as well as other interpretations (Pellauer & Dauenhauer, 2016). This idea was the springboard for the development of an explanatory method that seeks to make explicit what is tacit, or to ‘explain more in order to understand better’ (Pellauer & Dauenhauer, 2016, p. 13).

The development of CHaSSMM is a response to observations within my own design practice, most notable of these has been an absence of a model of best practice for the design of difficult exhibitions both within the organisation...
of PROOF and within the wider field. CHaSSMM begins with what I argue are the fundamental tenets of difficult exhibitions: (1) that they are based on an ideological framework created by a social group; (2) they are a performance of that ideological framework via multiple modes of semiotic resources; and (3) that they seek to be an affective emotional experience for visitors, often for the purposes of education and encouraging visitors to engage in a call to action. In addition to these points, CHaSSMM has also been designed to encourage a deep level of reflexivity within design practice, recognising that difficult exhibition design projects often contain traumatic, controversial content from culturally and socially diverse perspectives. Within my own design practice, I have experienced a range of challenges that have pushed me to recognise and reconsider my own technical, creative, cultural and social limitations. It has also highlighted something unexpected within practice: that the ‘kernel of trauma’ in the very act of knowing (Pitt & Britzman, 2003) not only impacts visitors, but can be a traumatic experience for designers as well. The content of a difficult exhibition can be deeply confrontational and emotionally exhausting, and yet full of purpose and the promise of hope. They can be as educational as they can be expanding of the self. They are, to borrow from Ricoeur, ‘...a return to the self by way of its other’ (Ricoeur cited in, Thompson, 1981, p. 57). CHaSSMM is a response these challenges.

As a theory for design practice, CHaSSMM aims to:

1. Provides an explanation of how ‘visual communication signifies what to whom’;
2. Relates to the real-world, through real-life experiences and audiences;
3. Provides terminology that is clear, concise and precise;
4. Provides a model, ‘a paradigm for making critical judgements’;
5. Provides tools for conceptualisation and presentations;
6. That it acts as a testing lab, and that it be verifiable through practice (Skaggs, 2017a, pp. 8-9).

CHaSSMM is, first and foremost, a framework for questioning. By bringing together critical hermeneutics with social semiotics and multimodality, I have developed CHaSSMM to assist designers and other exhibition professionals to address the ideological and representational aspects of difficult exhibitions, and encourage a reflexive approach to practice. CHaSSMM is a double-layered theoretical framework, comprising:

1. The ‘3x3 Model’, which maps key theoretical aspects of Critical Hermeneutics, Social Semiotics and Multimodality across the stages of difficult exhibition design; and
2. The Reflexive Circuit, which provides a more detailed framework for open-ended questioning within design practice.

These two frameworks laid the foundation for methods of practice that have been tested and further developed through the design of four difficult exhibitions for PROOF: Broken? (USA), Unearthed: Stories of Courage in the Face of Sexual Violence (India), Picturing Moral Courage: The Rescuers (Australia), and Ferguson Voices: Disrupting the Frame (USA). Each exhibition, as separate practice-led projects, will be explained in more detail in Chapter 6. This chapter will begin with an overview of the key theoretical approaches within critical hermeneutics, social semiotics and multimodality as they apply to difficult exhibition design. Following this, I will explain the CHaSSMM frameworks in more detail, before concluding with some suggestions for CHaSSMM’s potential applications beyond this study.
3.2 Theoretical building blocks of CHaSSMM

The theoretical foundations of the CHaSSMM Model have been threaded together with the methodological bricolage underpinning this project, and in particular, a concept raised by educational and cultural theorist Joe L. Kincheloe, in which he argues that the intellectual power of the bricolage is the synergy that emerges when different methodological and interpretive perspectives are employed within analysis, allowing researchers to bring together forms of research that are divergent, thus enabling ‘the unique insight of multiple perspectives’ (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 687, see Chapter 4 for more detail). This multiperspectivism has been fostered in this research project for two reasons: firstly, it is aligned to the nature of design practice, which often sees designers collaborate with a diverse range of specialists from other fields or organisations, with whom they may or may not share a social or cultural background or professional discipline. This requires an empathetic approach to understanding the project’s aims and stakeholders, as well as a flexible approach to generating ideas, prototyping and testing possible outcomes (Brown, 2008; Cross, 2001, 2011; Kimbell, 2011, 2012). Secondly, incorporating multiperspectivism into the building of a theory of practice necessitates an investigation that looks over and across more than one approach to interpretation and understanding, while also finding threads that bring them together as a means of questioning and answering.

To this end, Critical Hermeneutics, Social Semiotics and Multimodality have been specifically chosen because they offer different but practical ways to think about the nature and design practice of difficult exhibitions, while at the same time, share a concern for understanding the power structures within the dialogic encounters of interlocutors (Machin & van Leeuwen, 2016; Thompson, 1981; van Leeuwen, 2005). Critical hermeneutics, and in particular social scientist Johnathan Roberge’s application of Ricoeur’s theories of meaning, action and experience to ‘the problem of ideology’, is explained and applied to difficult exhibition design practice (Roberge, 2011, p. 5). This is then employed to build upon the work of design researcher Marcus Jahnke, who investigated the relevance of Paul Ricoeur’s ‘hermeneutic spiral…[as a]…metaphor for designing’ (Jahnke, 2012, p. 31). However, in line with the bricolage methodology, this study recognises the limitations in attempting to create a framework of interpretation that relies on the critical hermeneutic approach alone. I note here in particular Ricoeur’s concept of the ‘text’ being ‘regarded as a work of discourse submitted to the condition of inscription’ and the reader’s interpretive relationship to such texts (Thompson, 1981, p. 51). Design presents additional challenges for practitioners, as it involves both interpretation and creation that require a critical distance to self, practice and ‘text’. Furthermore, the term ‘text’ itself puts a type of semantic limit on what is actually a complex, situated landscape of images, texture, typography, space, colour, artifacts and form, which combine to communicate discourses. Thus, applying the term ‘text’ to the double-ended interpretation of design practice is not wholly representative; it is more useful to describe design as being (but not limited to) a practice located in and engaging with a multimodal landscape of semiotic resources. To address this, the CHaSSMM Model looks to social semiotics and multimodality not only for its interpretive value to design practice, but because it too recognises the social and cultural implications for meaning making. More particularly, CHaSSMM maps van Leeuwen’s use of J.L. Austin’s locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts (or, as he re-terms them, ‘communicative acts’) over Ricoeur’s theories of meaning, action and experience (van Leeuwen, 2005). In this way, CHaSSMM builds upon the work of Marcus Jahnke, and points itself directly towards the complex nature of difficult exhibitions and the challenges of designing them within professional practice.

3.2.1 Hermeneutics, critical hermeneutics and design

As a philosophical tradition, hermeneutics has its origins in the interpretation of sacred and legal texts, and has had significant influence in both continental philosophy and applied social research (Given & Freeman, 2008). Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) first proposed that no knowledge was uninterpreted or atheoretical. This was followed by the philosophical theory of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who argued that hermeneutic thinking is not only a universal human activity, but that we engage in two types of interpretive acts: ‘every day’ interpretation that requires little thought, and the interpretation of more ambiguous, complex texts that are not readily understood (Given & Freeman, 2008). This can also be explained as being, on one hand, the grammatical interpretation of a text and, on the other, the concepts of which
it speaks (Thompson, 1981). Schleiermacher's theory became central to modern hermeneutics, the three most significant branches of these being conservative, philosophical and critical hermeneutics (Given & Freeman, 2008; Thompson, 1981). Conservative hermeneutics is concerned with locating the true meaning of a text, and so attempts to ‘bracket out’ the preconceptions of a reader. Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), Emilio Betti (1890-1968) and Eric Donald Hirsch Jr (1928-) were most notable in the development of this methodical approach to hermeneutics (Given & Freeman, 2008).

Philosophical (or historical) hermeneutics, which has been linked to Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), focuses on the event of understanding itself, rather than giving preference to the text or reader (Given & Freeman, 2008; Roberge, 2011; Thompson, 1981). Gadamer believed that all interpretation begins with questioning, and it is this act of wonder that ‘breaks open the being of the object’ (Gadamer cited in, Jahnke, 2012, p. 38). His ‘horizon of understanding’ and ‘hermeneutic circle’ are of particular importance to this branch of hermeneutics. The former refers to our ‘historically effected consciousness’, which is being shaped and reshaped constantly by ‘multiple horizons of meaning or traditions’ (Given & Freeman, 2008, p. 387; Thompson, 1981). In other words, our horizon of understanding is used when we interpret the other; when we reach a new understanding, our horizon fuses with that of the other, thus expanding our own horizon, and with it, our interpretive capacity. Gadamer’s ‘hermeneutic circle’ refers to the role that dialogue plays within interpretation, in relation to the reader-text relationship. This dialogue moves in a circular motion centrifugally towards understanding (Gadamer cited in, Jahnke, 2012). Moreover, within this hermeneutic circle, Gadamer argued that it is pre-understanding that is essential to interpretation, and any explicit understanding derived is bound to implicit pre-understanding (Given & Freeman, 2008), and therefore, understanding is not achieved in isolation, but stems directly from the tradition of the interpreter (Thompson, 1981).

Critical hermeneutics, to which Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas are most closely associated, is the umbrella term used to define the shared theoretical and methodological projects that a range of philosophical and social-theoretical thinkers have undertaken since the 1960s (Clark, 2010; Kögler, 2008; Pellauer & Dauenhauer, 2016; Rosfort, 2013). According to philosopher and critical social theorist, Hans-Herbert Kögler, it is ‘hermeneutic’ because there is a shared pursuit in understanding and interpreting ‘symbolic expressions, including texts, actions, images and practices’ (Kögler, 2008, p. 3). It is also ‘critical’ because it situates the foundation of interpretation as being linked to social power, and is therefore involved in creating systematic analyses of the ‘nature, structure, and impact of power on the constitution and understanding of meaning’ (Kögler, 2008, p. 3). Freeman and Given (2008) explain that critical hermeneutic theorists are wary of the assumption that any text can reveal the true meaning of an author; instead, what is of major concern is allowing the author and reader to engage in a more reflective and critical process of interpretation, wherein the historical, power and ideological positions of both, and the influence these have on a text, are more fully revealed.

Critical hermeneutics’ most notable departure from philosophical/historical hermeneutics can be found in its approach to the question of tradition and authority. Indeed, Gadamer’s views on the role of tradition within the act of interpretation drew its critics, most notably resulting in the Gadamer-Habermas debate (Roberge, 2011). Jürgen Habermas argued that Gadamer’s approach to the role of tradition in interpretation omits a critique of tradition itself, and as a result, leaves no room for understanding the potential for ‘coercion, of systematically contorted communication, and of ideology’ (Roberge, 2011, p. 7). While this study does not seek to delve too deeply into the Gadamer-Habermas debate, Roberge interestingly notes that Gadamer’s views on authority were never related to submission, but recognition, and that attempts to view the tradition one is immersed in equates to an ‘Archimedean point for both knowledge and critique that cannot rightfully exist’ (Roberge, 2011, p. 7). However, Habermas argued that it is within “spheres” of communicative action’ that oppression occurs, as often the terms of communication are set by a dominant power (Jahnke, 2012, p. 35). Jahnke explains that Ricoeur’s solution to the deadlock between tradition and authority posed by the Gadamer-Habermas debate was to reintroduce epistemology back into hermeneutic interpretation by way of metaphoric, poetic redescription and critical distancing, resulting in an ‘ontologically derived interpretation.
and an epistemologically derived reflection (which might be distanced and critical)’ (Jahnke, 2012, p. 34). This ‘hermeneutic spiral’, in which ontology and epistemology are intertwined, opens the interpreter up to ‘the excess of meaning’ of the world, rather than locking meaning to established history and tradition’ (Jahnke, 2012, p. 34). Further, Jahnke argues that the hermeneutic spiral, being based on Ricoeur’s notion that there can only be ‘ontological indications’ as opposed to absolute ontological meaning, makes a more effective metaphor for design, reflecting the open-ended nature of design inquiry, and recognizing that the designer seeks meaning from a wide range of ‘complex assemblages’ made up of material artifacts, embodied experiences and articulated meanings that are not always negative, but may also be inspirational (Jahnke, 2012, p. 36). In particular, he uses Ricoeur’s employment of metaphors in ‘poetic redescription’ to draw attention to the more well-worn terms of ‘problem-solving’ or ‘idea generation’ within design discourse, instead replacing it with ‘understanding’ as a central activity of practice.

Roberge (2011) explains that critical hermeneutics is intrinsically linked to the question of ideology as being central to historical and contemporary theoretical inquiries within the sociological discipline, and that ideology functions as a ‘system of signs’, ‘a semiotic network in which elements position themselves in opposition to others’ (Roberge, 2011, p. 8). It is through this semiotic network that ideology ‘reveals and conceals’ in what Ricoeur called the ‘semantic knot’ of hermeneutics:

> Everything then turns on the nature of the knot—the nexus—that binds the legitimacy claims raised by the governors to the belief in that authority on the part of the governed. The paradox of authority resides in this knot. Ideology, we may presume, arises precisely in the breach between the request of legitimacy emanating from a system of authority and our response in terms of belief (Ricoeur cited in, Roberge, 2011, p. 9).

This ‘semantic knot’—or ‘battlefield of ideologies’—also contains the possibility of more than one interpretation, which, argues Roberge, does not constitute a flaw, but rather, ‘a privilege of comprehension as such at the heart of interpretation’ (Ricoeur cited in, Roberge, 2011, p. 9). In acknowledging the presence of this ambiguity, it follows that interpretation can usefully begin with questioning not only what can be seen, but also what might be hidden. It is here that I return to the foundations of difficult exhibitions, in particular, that they are first and foremost ideological. Ricoeur suggested that ideology points to the need for a social group to not only have an image with which it represents itself to others, but to use as a mirror to reflect back upon itself, to fully realise itself (Roberge, 2011). Exhibiting is just such a mirror, one that society uses as a mimetic form of representation to learn about its often disparate and complex parts. It follows, then, that from the outset of any difficult exhibition project, there is a necessity for critical distancing in order for understanding to be fostered more holistically in regards to ideology. The alternative is to risk a blinkered belief in our own ‘goodness’, which can lead, on the one extreme, to an exhibition that fails to emotionally engage, or on another, is a vehicle for propaganda.

3.2.2 Critical hermeneutic theories of meaning, action and experience

The value of critical hermeneutics to design practice can be found in its willingness to engage in a critique of tradition and its power structures, and what Roberge argued is a ‘capacity to renew our understanding of the problem of ideology’ through an articulation of Ricoeur’s theory of meaning to one of action and experience (Roberge, 2011, p. 5). The potential application of these theories within design practice is not only to be found in the framing of questions for analysis, but also in the further development of methods of practice such as CHaSSMM. The theory of meaning relates to ideology itself, which, Roberge argues, has three main characteristics: first, that it can never be partial or secondary, but is meaning; it is meaning-full. Secondly, ideology sits within the realm of interpretation, and that what is interpreted is ‘the group’: what exists between its members, and the nature of what exists within and outside of its boundaries. Ideology by its very nature places itself in opposition to other knowledge, and, it can be argued, for an ideological position to exist at all, other knowledge must sit in exclusion to it. Thirdly, as mentioned above, ideology can be understood as a ‘text’; this characteristic, explains Roberge (2011), is where the complexity of ideology exists, because it is also where there is most cultural
autonomy. This text is referential, signing an indirect relationship to itself while also maintaining a distance to itself and other things. It is within this indirect relationship that the theory of meaning points to the ambiguity of multiple interpretations, ‘the impassable relationship between clarity and obscurity, between unveiling and disguise…’ (Roberge, 2011, p. 8). In his essay on the exhibition, The Family of Man, Roland Barthes provides an excellent example of how ideological frameworks are ‘performed’ through exhibits (Barthes, 1972). The Family of Man, first displayed in 1955, was a photographic exhibition curated by the Museum of Modern Art’s Edward Steichen. Barthes wrote that the aim of the exhibition was to ‘show the universality of human actions in the daily life of all the countries of the world: birth, death, work, knowledge, play…’ (Barthes, 1972, p. 100). However, Barthes argues that the exhibition functioned as a myth, one that ambiguously refers to a human ‘community’, placing nature at the bottom of history. Birth becomes a documented function of the body, rather than reflecting its changing nature due to social, economic and cultural influences. Another useful example of how the theory of meaning operates in the context of difficult exhibitions can be seen in regards to the Inside exhibition, detailed in Chapter 5 (National Museum of Australia, 2013). In this case, the very ideology that resulted in the commissioning of the exhibition is a radical departure from that which came before it; that is, for much of the 20th Century, the Australian Government created policies that, rather than promoting opportunities for families in need to stay together, placed children in ‘care’. Simultaneously, the government turned a blind eye for many years to what would later be revealed as widespread institutional child abuse, perpetrated by many of the organisations charged with that care. However, this shift in ideology is representative of other, more hidden power structures in and around the exhibition. Firstly, there’s the power that resides in collective advocacy by and on behalf of the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, which resulted in the push for change at a national government level. There is also the power at a government level, which not only implements changes in response to an ideological shift, but also to what extent it will result in real actions and representations for those it affects. Thirdly, there’s the institutional power of the museum that, with its own embedded professional and cultural practices, creates a tension around who should be represented and how, and indeed who has the authority to decide (Chynoweth, 2015). The theory of meaning, therefore, cannot be separated from a difficult exhibition’s conception and planning, and its framework needs to be explicitly understood through critical distancing and questioning. It is only once this is undertaken that the display of such an ideology can be more fully articulated through the theory of action.

The theory of action relates to the notion that ideology is performed out in the world via the text, that it ‘develops and fulfills signification’ (Roberge, 2011). In other words, the theory of action is the manifestation of the semiotic network of elements that are employed to communicate an ideological position. For difficult exhibition design practice, the theory of action becomes a link between a project’s ideological concepts and the planning and physicality of it in the world. In my own design practice, this has been where the double-ended interpretation has been at its most complex. For example, a range of factors shaped the redesign of The Rescuers ArtWalk in Port Macquarie, including the purpose of the event, the outdoor space, the time of day, and the proportions of the wall it was projected onto. These in turn had an impact on the exhibition’s content, which was specifically renegotiated from its previous versions. All of these factors integrated to become the semiotic network that performed the project’s ideology within a particular social context (see Chapter 6 for more detail). In another example, in Ashley Hunt’s work, which includes a narration of his experiences documenting the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, there is an additional layer of performance that brings the documentarian together with the audience. As he shows video and photographic footage of the post-hurricane city, his narration acts as another multimodal semiotic resource, one that provides a personal and powerful live connection between his experiences and the audience (Hunt, n.d). In this respect, the theory of action is where we begin to see a more tangible overlap between critical hermeneutic theories and concepts within social semiotic and multimodal theories. In developing and fulfilling signification, designers are employing a range of semiotic resources to perform that ideology to visitors, and therefore also linking together the three theories of meaning, action and lastly, experience.

The theory of experience focuses on the way we come to understand how ideology can affect us through meaning-making processes. Complex and ever-
shifting, experience relates to the hermeneutic text as it brings us back to the reader-receiver relationship, and how it is only through this act of reading that a text can ‘renew and fulfill itself’ (Roberge 2011, p. 13). Because difficult knowledge can be problematic for audiences, the process of design also needs to consider a range of potential visitor experiences, and the role that affect plays in particular. However, it is not always possible to test and survey audiences before an exhibition is fabricated. This is a particular limitation in the case for PROOF’s projects, which have extremely tight budgets. By employing the theory of experience into the CHaSSMM Model, my own design practice has opened up to thinking about audiences as a combination of consumers, students, citizens and activists; they become an integral part of the exhibition, who have an agency and authority to also become communicators of the project’s ideology to others. It has also encouraged me to think about ways to draw out the tacit knowledge of project collaborators in order to open dialogue as the project progresses, to assess the design against stated project aims, and enable it to be tested within the exhibition team. This allows projects to progress with limited resources, while still ensuring that there is a means of assessing design concepts according to aims. An incorporation of the theory of experience in project research, planning and design encourages a preemptive approach to the concept of visitor affect. Further, it has encouraged me to seek a broader knowledge of related fields that sit outside of design, such as visitor and education studies, so that an up-to-date understanding of what constitutes difficult knowledge and its impact on society and culture, for example, can be brought into design practice. Figure 2 provides an overview of how these theories relate to the practice of designing difficult exhibitions.

CRITICAL HERMENEUTIC THEORIES

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<th>THEORY OF MEANING</th>
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This study’s emphasis on the value of critical hermeneutics is not aimed to be a dismissal of other hermeneutic schools of thought and how they have been hitherto applied to design, but is instead a recognition of the value of critical hermeneutics to the particular nature of difficult exhibitions within contemporary society. Additionally, critical hermeneutics’ acknowledgement of the possibility of new knowledge is particularly well-suited to design practice and theory, which is based on the idea of searching for what ‘can be’, both within the production of artifacts and design practice itself (Jahnke, 2012; Kimbell, 2011, 2012). However, while many discussions on critical hermeneutics in the context of design have remained largely theoretical, it’s the challenge of this research project to look more specifically at how it can be implemented as method within design practice, and further, how this can also benefit all professionals involved in the creation of difficult exhibitions. CHaSSMM builds upon the theories of meaning, action and experience by employing them as a scaffolding for understanding ideology within the particular context of difficult exhibition design, and the ways in which the ideology is communicated to a broader public. Interestingly, not only do Ricoeur’s theories reflect the life cycle of difficult exhibitions, but also have points of overlap with social semiotics and multimodality. In much the same way, social semiotics and multimodality can play a valuable role in difficult exhibition design practice because they are concerned with the complex nature of contemporary communication as discourses, the meaning potential of multimodal, semiotic resources, and the power relationships they communicate. More particularly to CHaSSMM, it is within the context of ‘communicative acts’ that critical hermeneutics and social semiotics find themselves in alignment.

3.2.3 Semiotics: studying the signs and symbols of communication

What is so amazing about doodling on a piece of paper? Well, let’s begin with some basic questions: What colour is the doodle—is that colour a feature of the doodle or is it in your head? Is the squiggle meaningful to you? Meaningful to anyone else? How is it meaningful? Could it be more meaningful? Could it have the power to hurt someone’s feelings? To have someone fall in love with you? Could it sell a boat, ruin a marriage, ensure a bequest, save a soul?

– Skaggs (2017a, p. 16).
Skaggs’ quest to understand the meaning of a doodle is a deceptively simple analogy for what is in fact the complex activity of semiotics. As a discipline, it has its roots in linguistics and has been defined as being ‘the science which studies the life of signs in our social interaction’ (Morgan & Welton, 1992, p. 41). It has been applied across a wide range of disciplines, including the arts, psychology, law and anthropology, and includes a diverse theoretical range of approaches, including cognitive, pragmatic, cultural and social semiotics (Spinillo, 2017). Two seminal theorists in this field are Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure and American philosopher, Charles S. Peirce.

De Saussure’s semiology took a structuralist approach to understanding written and verbal language (Morgan & Welton, 1992; Skaggs, 2017a; van Leeuwen, 2005). He created the signified + signifier = sign model in which the signified (concept being represented) and signifier (the word used to represent the signified) combine to become the sign (de Saussure, 2005). For example, in Figure 3, the word ‘Ferguson’ is a sign which is made up of the signified (the place that is called ‘Ferguson’) and the signifier (the proper noun, spelled F-E-R-G-U-S-O-N).

Peirce’s semiotics viewed the concept of the sign somewhat differently to de Saussure, recognising that everything we come to know is a result of semiosis—that is, via the action of signs and the work that they do (Skaggs, 2017a; van Leeuwen, 2005). The sign sits within a ‘semiotic moment’ that engages the sign in a triadic relationship with the referent (that the sign represents or stands in for), resulting in the interpretant (the effect the sign has upon the interpreting system, i.e. thoughts, as in Figure 4).

Skaggs (2017a) argues that de Saussure’s code-based semiology has been problematic when applied to the non-code based elements of visual communication; it is Peirce’s semiotics that has been significant in the development of design theory and visual communication, particularly in the area of information design (Brandt et al., 2013; Darras, 2017; Dondero, 2017; Skaggs, 2017b). Peirce’s triadic sign relationships extend de Saussure’s linguistic-focused ‘sign’ to include what Skaggs defines as ‘visents’ (visual entities), allowing them to be accounted for within the semiotic moment. He further adds that, while all of Morris’ semiotic groupings should be included in the development of theory for design practice, a predominant focus should be on syntax and semantics, as it is not only in these areas that designers are
active, but also, somewhat ironically, where most understanding is lacking. These arguments are significant to the design of difficult exhibitions, which, although deeply concerned with the pragmatics of emotional affect, is still predominantly an activity based in syntactics and semantics. However, while not discounting the value of Peircean semiotics, it has its limitations in difficult exhibition design. For example, Skaggs' theory frames semiotic analysis as being focused on either a singular visent unit or as part of a “habit group”, a principled set, a number of independent visents held together and classified by some trait that determines them to be members of a class (Skaggs, 2017a, p. 204). While this can be applied to both unitary and plural visents within a difficult exhibition, it does not provide a framework for analysing less tangible elements. For example, every exhibition will have a variety of possible spatial arrangements, made more complex if they are travelling exhibitions and need to be flexible for a range of situations. On face value, this might appear to be a design challenge connected to budget and fabrication, but deeper semiotic analysis can reveal power dynamics related to the level of autonomy visitors may have within the space, which in turn can affect how sensorial knowledge is produced.

In this light, social semiotics and multimodality offer a more expansive and flexible way to approach the analysis of difficult exhibitions. Together, they focus on understanding the how and what of communication, and in this way are complementary to the why of critical hermeneutics. Further, they recognise communicative acts as being part of a range of discourses in contemporary society, situating them as part of a social and cultural system, and bring CHaSSMM's focus back to the importance of semiosis as a cultural and social phenomenon.

3.2.4 Social Semiotics, multimodality and the CHaSSMM Model

According to semiotician Gunther Kress (2010), social semiotics is interested in meaning and all of its forms. Social environments and interactions are considered the source, origin and generator of meaning, and so too the semiotic resources that are produced in order to make discourses communicable. The social and the semiotic are inextricably linked. Social semiotics, therefore, focuses on two closely related issues in order to understand how meaning is produced—the material resources of communication and the social context in which their use is regulated (van Leeuwen, 2005). Social semiotician and linguist Theo van Leeuwen, whose work, along with Kress, has been seminal in the field of social semiotics, explains that it is not ‘pure’ theory or a self-contained field, but comes into its own when it’s applied to a specific instance or problem in conjunction with other discipline-specific theories. It is a form of inquiry that does not offer ready-made answers, but is a vehicle for formulating questions and searching for answers. Social semiotics revolves around the activities of creating inventories of semiotic resources used within a particular context, analysing their historical and contemporary use, and identifying new semiotic modes of communication. In this way, it is complementary to the practice of design, as well as the ontological possibility of new knowledge found within design and critical hermeneutics.

At the heart of social semiotics is the term semiotic resource, which Kress also calls ‘resources for representation’ (Kress, 2010). It denotes that such resources are ‘constantly remade; never willfully, arbitrarily, anarchically, but precisely, in line with what I need, in response to some demand’ (Kress, 2010, p. 8). The term originated in the work of M.A.K Halliday, who proposed that the grammar of language is not a code or set of rules for producing ‘correct’ sentences, but rather, a ‘resource for making meaning’ (van Leeuwen, 2005). Van Leeuwen extends Halliday’s use of the term grammar to include all manner of actions and artifacts used to communicate: pen, ink and paper, computers, facial expressions and vocal apparatus, and even fabric, cut and sewn into the clothes through which we express our identities. Semiotic resources are viewed as being intricately connected to the social context in which they’re used; they are observable actions and objects that are part of the social landscape of communication. The use of the term resource in social semiotics is what fundamentally differentiates it from other semiotic approaches, as it ‘avoids the impression that “what a sign stands for” is somehow pre-given, and not affected by its use’ (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 3).

Another key term in social semiotics is semiotic potential, which is closely linked to psychologist J.J Gibson's concept of affordance, or the potential uses of an object as stemming directly from their observable properties (Gibson cited in, van Leeuwen, 2005). Semiotic resources have both a theoretical semiotic potential, based on their historical and future potential use, and an actual
semiotic potential, which is a combination of their known past uses and those considered relevant to users. Kress (2010) argues that representational and communicational practices are always being altered in line with social changes, making the more fixed, traditional rules of grammar less useful in the rapidly changing communication landscape of today. This is not to say that meaning is a free-for-all, or that a resource might not have meaning deeply rooted in social discourse, but rather, given various circumstances and the particular multimodal context in which it is placed, its semiotic potential can shift. For example, when a testimony is placed into the context of an exhibition, it both contributes to and borrows from the overarching narrative. It also contributes to the semiotic potential of other modes, such as photographic portraits, which in turn may add a deeper level of emotional connection for visitors. In this regard, social semiotic analysis works in tandem with the concept of multimodality, which Kress (2010) suggests should be taken as the normal state of human communication.

Van Leeuwen (2011) explains that multimodality has traditionally referred to the integrated use of image, sound, language and music in communication within the field of linguistics. The cohesion of integrated modes can be assessed through such analytical tools as rhythm (for events that take place over time, such as music or film), composition (spatial arrangements), information linkage (cognitive links between items) and dialogue (dialogic exchanges) (van Leeuwen, 2005). In regards to the context of difficult exhibitions, there are two points to make: firstly, that they are always multimodal, and as Kress suggested, should therefore be taken as the normal state of communication. Secondly, multimodality encourages the naming of modes that contribute to an exhibition—the ‘what’ of communication—which may include background information, photographs, documents and other artifacts, space, colour and light. The naming of modes can not only support project management via the creation of an inventory, such as the one that was created for Unearthed, detailed in Chapter 6, but can also play an important role in making explicit what may be tacit understanding, and contribute to the analysis of a project’s design at various stages.

To illustrate how multimodality and social semiotic analysis can be used together, I return to the concept of ‘Ferguson’, which was outlined above in Saussarian terms. In Figure 6, the word becomes part of a multimodal semiotic resource—a complex assemblage of modes that make up an exhibition logo. Multimodal analysis begins with the naming of the logo's observable modes, which include colour, typographic elements, linguistic elements and a double-layered map/boundary graphic. The integration of these modes can be identified as being dialogic (between the linguistic modes and the map graphics), compositional (viewed as a unit within a particular space) and information linkages (cognitive links between the type and graphics). Social semiotic analysis can then be used to make semiotic potential more explicit; the linguistic mode has expanded from its original geographic denotation to now become part of an exhibition’s name, Ferguson Voices: Disrupting the Frame. The linguistic mode’s connotative meaning potential thus also expands, pointing to both the ideology of the exhibition and the event it focuses on (the shooting of teenager Michael Brown and the protests that followed). The word ‘frame’, the map and the boundary graphic integrate as both information linkages and dialogue to establish a concept of a bounded geographic location. Further, the map and the boundary graphic supply meaning potential to each other; while a map itself can only be identified as such because of its historical use within culture, it plays a role in solidifying the meaning of the boundary graphic, which would otherwise be difficult for most people to ‘read’ as representing Ferguson’s boundary shape. At the same time, the boundary’s graphic treatment, with its ‘blurred lines’, suggest a border that is not impermeable, but is a metaphor for an issue and community that is part of a larger nation-state. Even this cursory semiotic analysis reveals that the word ‘Ferguson’ is no longer a single ‘sign’, even though it still retains part of its original geographic denotation. Instead, its close proximity to the other modes of the logo shift its meaning potential, expanding it from a singularly discursive proper noun to having multiple discourses denotatively and connotatively, linking meaning to a specific event and community. This logo, which will be looked at in more depth in Chapter 6, was not constructed in a random manner, but is the product of CHaSSMM analysis.
3.2.5 Difficult exhibitions as communicative acts: Discourses and genre

In the development of the foundational frameworks for CHaSSMM, I have focused specifically on the social semiotic concepts of discourses and genre, and their connection to ‘speech’ (or communicative) acts, as this is where I have identified the point where an overlap between critical hermeneutic, social semiotic and multimodal theories find common ground with difficult exhibition design.

The term discourse has traditionally denoted extended written or verbal texts; discourse analysis, therefore, is focused on understanding these types of texts. However, the plural term discourses in social semiotics builds upon the work of Michel Foucault as being ‘socially constructed knowledges of some aspect of reality’ (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 94), and thus creates an opportunity for other types of semiotic resources in all manner of modes to be acknowledged. Importantly, discourses (plural) highlights that there are many ways of coming to know, and as such, multiple possibilities for representation. Van Leeuwen (2005) explains that social semiotics offers four paths to analysing how reality is changed within discourse:

1. Exclusion: excluding elements of social practice, which can have a distorting effect (e.g. discourses of war that omit or minimise civilian casualties);
2. Rearrangement: discourses can rearrange the elements of social practices (e.g. de-temporalising);
3. Addition: adding elements to representations (e.g. evaluations, purposes, legitimations, etc.);
4. Substitutions: substitutions within discourses of concepts for concrete elements of social practice (e.g. concrete to abstract, specific to general, doing to being).

The analysis of discourses finds overlap with multimodality, as it too focuses on the ‘what’ of communication, but also more pointedly, it focuses our attention on the ways in which objects of representation can peculiarly shape knowledge. For example, an analysis of the photographic portrait in Figure 7, which was included in the Ferguson Voices exhibition, can be identified as being of the photographic mode and having multiple discourses which are communicated, at least in part, through its content. The image is a portrait of Chicana (Mexican-American) artist and counsellor, Elizabeth Vega, who set up an art space during the protests in Ferguson to assist the grieving community, and is the only photograph in the exhibit that represented more than one person in the frame (Kahn & Pruce, 2017). During the final editing stages of the exhibition, an alternative image with only Vega was proposed. However, in an email discussion with the curators and photographer, I suggested we keep the image originally proposed, as I felt the interaction between the African-American man on the left towards the Hispanic Vega offered a powerful connotative layer of meaning to the image; it spoke of a community that is more cohesive at the grassroots level than most discourses on Ferguson would suggest, and thereby contributing something quite distinct to knowledge production. A special note should be made of the role that emotional affect had within this aspect of design practice. By combining a reflexive approach to observing my own emotional response with semiotic analysis, it was possible to communicate what I thought was the emotional value of this image with other members of the exhibition team. It is also important to note that an analysis of this kind can lead to a deeper emotional connection between the designer and those being represented, and as this can contribute to the...
design outcomes, and observation through reflexivity is vital. Further, once the image was placed within the context of the exhibition, it contributed to other modes, such as background information and the testimonies of Vega and others, adding further layers of discourse to the image, and conversely, the image to the exhibition. Further, once the image is placed within the context of the exhibition, it also contributes to the meaning potential to other modes, such as background information and the testimonies of Vega and others, adding further layers of discourse to the image, and conversely, the image to the exhibition. It is also important to note that an analysis of this kind can lead to a deeper emotional connection between the designer and those being represented, and as this can contribute to the design outcomes, an observation through reflexivity is vital. To sum, this one photograph generates multiple discourses, and does so by not only representing ‘Elizabeth Vega’, but also ‘the people of Ferguson who stood up for justice within their community’ and ‘the integration of cultural groups in Ferguson’. In this respect, the ‘what’ of communication is always intertwined with the ‘how’. Van Leeuwen (2005) explains that in social semiotics, the terms genre and communicative acts represent approaches to understanding the ‘how’ of communication. Traditionally, the term genre was applied to the study of texts, breaking them down into content, form and function in order to identify typical characteristics of a genre. However, the social semiotic approach to genre applies these terms differently; as content and form more usefully apply to the ‘what’ of communication, content is instead placed under the heading of discourses, while form refers to the aspects of communication that are less concerned with representation, such as a string quartet needing four stringed instruments. Therefore, the social semiotic approach to genre focuses on the functional role of a semiotic resource within a particular social interaction, questioning what is does, who does it, for whom, where and when, and does so through understanding its communicative acts (van Leeuwen, 2005).

Van Leeuwen based his term Communicative acts on ‘speech acts’ by language philosopher, J.L. Austin (cited in, van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 122). Austin categorised speech acts into three interconnected groups: locutionary, which is a representation of something going on in the world; illocutionary, or the performance of a communication act, and; perlocutionary, or the effect this has on the reader (van Leeuwen, 2005). However, where Austin’s speech acts exclusively referred to text-based communication, van Leeuwen’s ‘communicative acts’ extend this focus to multimodal communication within social interactions.

To provide an example of what this might look like in the difficult exhibition field, if a locutionary act is the representation of the fact of victims of sexual violence in the world, the illocutionary refers to the action of communicating this, which would be the exhibition as a multimodal, semiotic resource. The perlocutionary act is the desired (and actual) visitor affect. It should be noted that, while a desired perlocutionary act is important to articulate within project planning, visitors should also be acknowledged as having an important role within this act, bringing with them an autonomy in meaning-making based on their personal contexts and ideologies (Figure 8). Social interaction is an integral part of each communicative act, and power relationships can be revealed by analysing the ways in which communicative acts are constructed, such as commands or offers within language, or the gaze within images, as noted above in the case of Elizabeth Vega’s portrait (van Leeuwen, 2005).
To break this down further, the locutionary acts are viewed as representations that are intertwined with the cognitive, sensorial and affective. Stage 1 of design, therefore, combines project planning with research in order to come to a greater understanding of the nature of the locutionary act (the topic) and the project’s aims. Illocutionary acts are intricately connected to the multimodal, semiotic resources that perform ideology in the world, via what they stand for as well as what they exclude. In stage 2 of design, these ‘assemblages’ of semiotic resources represent the ‘double-ended’ interpretation of design: that is, on one end, there is both the understanding reached in stage 1 and the resources provided by curatorial, and on the other end, the interpretation necessary for the creation of additional semiotic resources within design processes. At both ends, interpretation is a vital part of understanding the relationship between the semiotic ‘assemblages’ and their cognitive, sensorial and affective potential. The perlocutionary act is a culmination of stages 1 & 2, but also brings in the visitor as interpreter/meaning maker, and therefore once again links a communicative act to the cognitive, sensorial and affective. It is, in its truest sense, the performance of the ideology via the semiotic ‘assemblages’ of the design processes.

Bringing the above terms together in relation to the functional qualities of difficult exhibitions, two levels of genre are observable: on the first level, they sit under the umbrella category of exhibiting, borrowing from the genre its established authority and the communicative norms it shares with visitors in order to function as a trusted source of information. On the second level, difficult exhibitions diverge from the parent genre as they begin to function, for instance, as resources for social change. In this respect, their combined discourses (content) and function work together to mould the locutionary and illocutionary acts into the desired and actual perlocutionary act. Bringing these understandings into design practice can help to make explicit the functional purpose of the exhibition.

Social semiotics and multimodality offer a flexible yet powerful tool for analysis within difficult exhibition design. In particular, it builds on the core concepts of discourse, genre and communicative acts, as well as understanding the nature of semiotic resources within contemporary multimodal communication contexts. A particular focus on these concepts has provided a valuable point of overlap between critical hermeneutics, multimodal social semiotics and design practice, and it is these points of convergence that constitute the bedrock for the CHaSSMM Model of Analysis.

3.3 CHaSSMM Frameworks: 3x3 Model and the Reflexive Circuit

The framework of CHaSSMM is built upon two essential underlying frameworks: the 3x3 Model and the Reflexive Circuit. The 3x3 Model maps the theories of critical hermeneutics and the communicative acts of social semiotics to three main stages of a difficult exhibition project: research & understanding, ‘double-ended’ interpretation and project ‘performance’. These stages have been identified and streamlined through observation of and practice in numerous difficult exhibition projects, and they require different types of research, interpretation and analysis. A basic mapping of these concepts and stages is shown in Figure 9.

The 3x3 Model in Figure 10 has been applied to the context of difficult exhibitions. This provides a more focused application of the theories to a particular genre. The 3x3 Model then becomes an instrument for generating a range of possible questions related to a particular project. Figure 11 provides an example.

The 3x3 Model is then expanded in CHaSSMM’s more detailed analytical framework, the Reflexive Circuit, illustrated in Figure 12. This has been designed as a practicable guide for difficult exhibitions that allows simultaneously for project guidance and flexibility for the team members. Its aim is to act as a reminder of the key aspects I have identified in almost all of the difficult exhibitions I have designed over the last decade, and yet to remain open to further observations and development. Its implementation in practice will be explained in more detail in Chapter 6.
3.4 Conclusion

This CHaSSMM Model of Analysis, specific to difficult exhibitions, is the first of its kind. It aims to bridge the knowledge gap between an exhibition’s team members by identifying the essential interpretive stages within exhibition projects. It has another aim of making these interpretive stages faster, by directing (but not limiting) the questions that help to reveal a project’s ideological framework, and how this ideology is performed through a range of multimodal semiotic resources throughout the stages of a project. It also draws our attention to the role of the visitor as an active participant in the meaning-making process, acknowledging the more unpredictable factor of visitor affect.

There are number of ways that CHaSSMM analysis can provide interpretive support for difficult exhibition designers in particular. Firstly, this model recognises that the interpretation of difficult exhibitions requires extensive research on behalf of the designer in the initial stages of a project. This model of analysis also recognises the sensitive and often complex nature of difficult exhibitions, and thus the social responsibility required by the exhibition team’s professionals. Additionally, by providing a scaffolding of questions, CHaSSMM analysis can provide a suggested pathway for preliminary research, aiming to make the response to design briefs more efficient, while allowing for some flexibility essential to project-specific research. CHaSSMM analysis can also act as a sounding board for the cultural, social and professional contexts of designers during practice, allowing for reflexivity, and acknowledging our responsibility in what is always a culturally and socially-situated practice. Finally, but importantly, it’s the aim of CHaSSMM analysis to expand the literature on difficult exhibitions to include a practice-based model that can be applied to real-world projects, thereby addressing a significant gap in the literature. As a theoretical approach, CHaSSMM has been designed to allow for further developments to harness the open-ended nature of design practice, avoiding a rigidity that can narrow questioning and dampen innovation. There are, however, other dimensions of difficult exhibitions that have only been touched on in this study, and therefore require more development in practice. I make particular note of visitor studies here, and this has been marked out for future studies. Interestingly, CHaSSMM is also showing potential as an analytical framework in other areas of design. As of the time of writing, it has been applied to the field of Communication Design for paediatric health, and it shows great promise in relation to uncovering power dynamics and patient affect within the health services context (Wahlin & Paulovich, 2017).

On a final note, CHaSSMM is very much a product of all of the people represented in all of the projects I have worked on to date. It is their profound courage to tell their stories, sometimes placing them in extreme danger, that has highlighted for me the responsibility we have within our practice as ‘double-ended interpreters’ for difficult exhibition design. It is my hope that CHaSSMM becomes a useful model for design practitioners who are engaged in representing vulnerable members of society. The following chapter provides an overview of the methodology and methods of this study.
Figure 10
(Left and right)
ChaSSMM 3x3 Model (expanded): Theoretical Foundation, Difficult Exhibition Design Projects.

**Design Stages**

**Research & Understanding**
- Background Research: Production of Project Brief, including articulation of framework in Project Brief, Project Brief, and Project Brief, Affect, Affect, Affect, Social, Cultural.

**Locutionary Act**
- The act of representing something in the world: a 3x3 Table of Social Violence, Police Brutality on Genocide in the World.

**Ilocutionary Act**
- The performance of the theoretical act (i.e., speaking and action in social, cultural, and affective networks).

**Perlocutionary Act**
- The calling up of affect in the reader, an affective response to the exhibition, Call to Action.

**Theory of Meaning**
- The underlying ideological framework of the project:
  - Theoretical Foundation: ChaSSMM 3x3 Model
  - Difficult Exhibition Design Projects.

**Theory of Action**
- The performance of the project:
  - Educational, Affective, Social, Cultural.

**Theory of Experience**
- Visitor engagement with the exhibition, affective, sensorial, learning, Call to Action.

**Critical Hermeneutic Theories**

**Double-Ended Interpretation**
- Alignment of project aims with double-ended interpretation of semiotic resources provided and elaborated by the designer as performance (feedback, interpretation of the affective, sensorial, feedback, and testing).

**Visitor Performance**
- Visitor interaction with the exhibition, affective, sensorial, learning, Call to Action.
EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS RAISED BY CHaSSMM MODEL

RESEARCH AND UNDERSTANDING

PROJECT CURATORIAL & DESIGN INTERPRETATION (DOUBLE-ENDED INTERPRETATION)

VISITOR EFFECTS

RESEARCH (THEORY OF MEANING & LOCUTIONARY ACT)

- UNDERLYING ECLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT
- STAKEHOLDERS
- COMMUNITY GROUPS
- BACKGROUND OF ISSUE BEING REPRESENTED
- CULTURAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE EXHIBITION

DESIGN PLANNING & DESIGN

- SEMIOTIC INVENTORY ANALYSIS OF VISUAL AND TEXTUAL MATERIAUS USING SEMIOTIC BINARY CHART, KEY WORDS

AFFECT

- WHAT ARE THE LIKELY AFFECTIVE QUALITIES OF THE EXHIBITION VISITORS?
- WHAT KIND OF AFFECTIVE QUALITIES DO WE NOT WANT THE EXHIBITION TO HAVE?
- IS THERE A POSSIBILITY OF THE EXHIBITION HAVING NEGATIVE AFFECTIVE OUTCOMES ON SOME VISITORS IF SO, WHAT Might THAT BE AND WHAT ARE THERE MEASURES WE CAN TAKE TO MINIMIZE THIS OR SUPPORT THEM?

CREATION OF THE DESIGN BRIEF

- BACKGROUND INFORMATION
- SEMIOTIC INVENTORY OF MATERIALS PROVIDED BY CURATORIAL
- OUTLINE OF CURATORIAL DESIGN IDEAS OR REQUESTS
- SPATIAL ARRANGEMENTS OF EXHIBITION
- BUDGET
- NOTH ANY OTHER RESTRICTIONS (IE. TRAVELLING EXHIBITION, LIST OF SUPPLIERS TO BE USED, REQUESTED MATERIALS TO USE, ETC.)

DESIGN PLANNING & DESIGN

- DESIGN OF EXHIBITION, DESIGN PRACTICE, COLLABORATION WITH EXHIBITION TEAM, TESTING AND REVISION
- PRINT &/OR DIGITAL PRODUCTION OF EXHIBITION

ACTION

- IS THERE A DESIRED ACTION THAT WE WANT VISITORS TO ENGAGE IN?
- WHAT MECHANISMS DO WE NEED TO INTEGRATE WITHIN THE EXHIBITION DESIGN TO ENCOURAGE THIS?

CHaSSMM TAGS: THEORY OF MEANING, LOCUTIONARY ACT, SEMIOTIC INVENTORY, FIELD.

CHaSSMM TAGS: THEORY OF ACTION, ILLOCUTIONARY ACT, SEMIOTIC INVENTORY, BINARY ANALYSIS, REFLEXIVE DESIGN, HABITUS.

CHaSSMM TAGS: THEORY OF EXPERIENCE, PERLOCUTIONARY ACT, REVIEW OF DESIGN BRIEF.

CHaSSMM TAGS: THEORY OF MEANING, LOCUTIONARY ACT, SEMIOTIC INVENTORY, FIELD.

Figure 11 shows examples of questions that were raised by the CHaSSMM model.

Figure 12: The CHaSSMM Reflexive Circuit of Analysis breaks the 3x3 model down into actionable stages.
4 Research Design

4.1 Introduction

This chapter details the design of this research project, which, having been guided by both the nature of the design discipline and the central research questions, preferences a qualitative approach. This research is framed within an epistemologically constructivist and ontologically subjective perspective, and acknowledges the fundamental role of interpretation in the generation of knowledge both theoretically and within design practice. It is guided by a theoretical and methodological bricolage, which has allowed the research to respond to design problems specifically related to the interdisciplinary nature of difficult exhibition design. This chapter provides an overview of these perspectives, beginning with the axiological position of the researcher and followed by an outline of the strategies and methods of data collection and analysis.

4.2 Axiological position of the researcher

For many years, I have been involved in a range of activist organisations that span the fields of human rights, social justice and environmentalism. Within my professional career, I have also worked in the business and performance sectors of the arts, and as a journalist for magazines, newspapers and blogs. My educational background spans journalism and graphic design, and is where my interest in communications and semiotics was born. It is this interest, combined with my background in social activism, that drives this research inquiry. Since I began designing exhibitions in 2009, my design practice and its ideological underpinnings has both informed and been informed by PROOF: Media for Social Justice. My research began
as a vehicle for gaining a more in-depth knowledge of exhibition design, while at the same time enabling me to question the more established modes of practice. Today, writing, activism, design and research are not mutually exclusive activities within my overall practice, but feed and inform one another. More specifically, though, this project has reinforced for me the potential of design to engage designers and audiences both intellectually and emotionally. It has not only brought me back to my own agency as a social activist, but expanded it. Perhaps most importantly of all, it has imparted to me an understanding of design’s potential power to instil hope or despair, to empower or deflate. As I come out the other side of this project, there is one expression that has embedded itself deep into my practice: Just because you can, doesn’t mean you should.

4.3 Research design: Epistemology and ontology

The design of this research has been guided by the nature of the inquiry, which is seeking to understand the nature of difficult exhibitions within the context of Communication Design, and in particular, the role of multimodal semiotic resources in performing an exhibition’s ideological framework. It acknowledges the importance of generating knowledge through design practice (Niedderer, 2007, 2013) and theory (Friedman, 2000, 2003, 2005), and that both theory and practice can be used to build upon and inform the other in an intertwined manner. From this perspective, the research design takes a qualitative approach, which Creswell (2014) explains is the exploration and understanding of the meanings that individuals or groups attribute to social or human problems. Crouch and Pearce (2012) argue that qualitative researchers tend to be interested in how the world is experienced by human beings in natural settings, and that such research aims to achieve a depth of understanding, rather than breadth. Epistemologically, this research sits within a constructivist perspective, as it is seeking an understanding of the world in which the researcher lives and works (Creswell, 2007, 2008, 2014; Jones, Torrs, & Arminio, 2006; J. Mason, 2002). It should also be noted, however, that it touches on the transformative perspective, as it is also seeking to understand power relationships through critical hermeneutic interpretation of difficult exhibition ideology (Creswell, 2014). In spanning both of these paradigms, this research acknowledges the importance of the researcher as an active participant in the interpretation of the world, rather than a passive observer (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014), and views this as being representative of the practice-led design research context.

The open-ended nature of the research questions have shaped the research design via basic philosophical assumptions: that it is inductive, focuses on individual meaning, and explains the complexity of a situation (Creswell, 2014; Crouch & Pearce, 2012). In order to understand the complexity of difficult exhibitions, the collection of data and its analysis are interpretive, or more specifically, seeking a critical distance between the research and the researcher, while still acknowledging the inevitability of subjectiveness. Ontologically, it follows the notion that qualitative researchers ‘are particularly disposed to recognise that reality is subjective and value-laden, and hence there is an emphasis on exploring researcher reflexivity’ (Crouch & Pearce, 2012, p. 70). This perspective aligns to Donald Schön’s notion of the reflexive practitioner, which centres on the concept of knowing-in-action, paying attention to phenomena as it arises, and being observant of intuitive understanding as it surfaces (Schön, 2008). Qualitative research, as an approach that provides a vehicle through which participants’ voices are heard, foregrounds the personal experiences and insights of the researcher. It is common, therefore, for practice-led design research to take an autobiographical perspective, wherein the author becomes central to the inquiry (Ings, 2011). In this study, however, this is made richer by combining observations of personal practice with that of other difficult exhibition professionals. These have been selectively included within this study.

Both Crouch and Pearce (2012) and Creswell (2014) stress the importance of qualitative research being located within the participants’ setting. In more specific reference to the design discipline, Crouch and Pearce add that it is necessary for the design of design research to stem from the research questions and the particular research position in order to determine the most applicable approach (Crouch and Pearce, 2012). This research project has taken this proposition to heart: being led by the questions it seeks to answer, it also takes up the challenge of designing a practice-led design research project that responds to the still emergent nature of the discipline and its methodological evolution.
4.4 Methodological bricolage

This study has undertaken a methodological bricolage in order to address the research questions and their epistemological, ontological and disciplinary concerns. The terms ‘bricolage’ and ‘bricoleur’ derive from the French words that refer to ‘do it yourself’ (Hammersley, 2012), and ‘takes into account uncertainty and complexity, experience and, perhaps, a certain intuitive sense’ (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). The terms were first applied within academic research by Claude Levi-Strauss (1972), who used it to argue the case for using myth and legend as a legitimate scientific approach to understanding the world (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) employed the term bricolage within qualitative research as a response to the ‘complex, dense, reflexive collage-like creation that represents the researcher’s images, understandings and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 6). The term has been applied to a range of discipline-specific methodologies, such as Action Research (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014), and within the fields of education (Kinchehloe, 2001), counselling and psychoanalysis (McLeod, 2001), and various areas of design, including landscape architecture (Büscher, Gill, Mogensen, & Shapiro, 2001) and Communication Design (Yeo, 2014). Yee and Bremner argue that the bricoleur is the ‘best operative’ within the practice-led design research context, as researchers navigate ‘complex, indeterminate and temporal’ frameworks (Yee & Bremner, 2011, p. n.p).

The inclusion of a methodological bricolage in this study has not been undertaken lightly, but rather, with the acknowledgement of arguments both for (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Kinchehloe, 2001; Yee & Bremner, 2011) and against this approach. However, some cases that oppose bricolage as a valid methodological approach, such as that of Martyn Hammersley (1999, 2012), present arguments from within the boundaries of an established discipline—in his case, ethnography—and make no allowances for the challenges of an emerging discipline. As this research is aiming to expand knowledge from within and about the practice-led design research discipline—one that is still relatively new and therefore has a lack of established methodological traditions of its own (Yee & Bremner, 2011)—there exists an opportunity to have the inquiry drive the methodology, not the other way around. I also acknowledge the arguments, articulated and counter-argued by cultural studies and education theorist Joe Kinchehloe, that have more specifically criticised bricolage as a problematic methodological approach for research students. Kinchehloe, however, recognises the doctorate as a key foundational step in the life-long pursuit of knowledge, and that bricolage is a response to what he calls the ‘social, cultural, epistemological, and paradigmatic upheavals and alterations’ that have occurred within the social sciences (Kinchehloe, 2001, p. 681). Kinchehloe’s argument not only resonates in regards to this study, but also with the challenges of the practice-led design field and the future development of its own methodologies. Yee and Bremner (2011) frame their support for a methodological bricolage within the practice-led design research discipline with the following questions/assertions: (1) Is there such thing as a research model? (2) Is a lack of methodology a sign that a discipline is in crisis? and (3) That design is undisciplined (or transdisciplined). To the last point, Yee and Bremner respond by arguing that design in fact transverses disciplines, and therefore a methodological bricolage is a sign of design needing to combine, adapt and create new connections between disciplines. This is most certainly true for this study, which has drawn on a wide range of disciplines in order to understand the rise and social impact of difficult exhibitions with the depth that Crouch and Pearce (2012) called for.

While Yee and Bremner (2011) acknowledge that design research can require an investigation of material, historical, scientific, social and psychological issues, their argument for the benefit of taking a bricolage approach is based on the nature of practice-led design research questions, as this focuses on the generation of new knowledge and understanding in an of itself. Further, as design is also concerned with the role that tacit understanding has within practice, it also stretches the more traditional research boundaries, which focus on articulating explicit understanding. This in turn has not only affected the types of questions that are generated, often leading from practice-led inquiry, but that practice has also become part of the interrogation and an instrumental part of the inquiry. Niedderer (2013) argues that the potential role of design processes and artifacts within research can play an important role in facilitating an appropriate approach for the inquiry. This research is an indication of how many disciplines, theoretical approaches, data types, artifacts and types of knowledge live within the sphere of interest of the designer; within this sphere, bricolage is not only a useful approach, it can also foster what Kinchehloe (2001) calls a ‘multiperspectivism’, opening up research to interdisciplinarity and empathy.
4.5 Theoretical approach

The theoretical basis of this study also takes a bricolage approach. This has been necessary due to the scope of the project and its investigation of proposed practice models for difficult exhibition design, as well as the interdisciplinary nature of the difficult exhibition context. As such, the theories that have proven invaluable for both the development of the CHaSSMM Model and gaining a depth of understanding of difficult exhibition design include critical theory, social theory (connected to critical hermeneutics and social semiotics respectively), design theory, cultural theory and education theory. These are explained in more depth in Chapter 2, ‘Difficult Exhibitions. Difficult Design.’ and Chapter 3, ‘The CHaSSMM Model of Analysis’.

4.6 Research methods for data collection

The research questions of this study became the fulcrum for the selection of methods. As a result, this study has drawn on multiple sources of data, while analysis of data and practice has been undertaken through a variety of critically interpretative responses, supported by the CHaSSMM Model. Data collection methods have also been chosen based on the nature of design as well as the field of difficult exhibiting, in order to harness the complex, interdisciplinary nature of design as it sits within the professional context of difficult exhibition design practice. I take this opportunity, therefore, to revisit the questions here:

1. What is the nature of difficult exhibition projects and their role within communities, culture and society?
2. What are the key aspects of the designer’s role within these projects?
3. How can difficult exhibitions be better understood as performances of ideological frameworks?
4. What can a multimodal, social semiotic perspective bring to difficult exhibition design?

In order to address the complexity of the questions, a bricolage of methods was explored. It follows Yee and Brenner’s (2011) assertion that, in order to derive the most suitable model of inquiry, the bricoleur will often combine methods from a diversity of disciplines that may include the social sciences, humanities, and hard sciences. This notion is also supported by Crouch and Pearce, who explain that the bricolage approach to collecting and analysing multiple data sources ‘is typical of this eclectic approach to research processes’ (Crouch & Pearce, 2012, p. 70). The following sections outline the specific methods used within this study.

4.6.1 Case study approach

The case study approach in this research follows Robert Stake (2009), who offers the notion of a case being related to any bounded system. Crouch & Pearce (2012) and Sharan Merriam (2009), expand upon Stake’s explanation. Crouch and Pearce (2012) note that a case must be bound by specifics such as time, place, events, processes or activities, and Merriam (2009, p. 40) explains it a single unit, an entity, a community or specific policy. Importantly, Merriam adds that we must understand a case study as having a limitation on the possible data that can be collected.

The cases within this research look specifically at exhibitions that can be defined as being ‘difficult’ (Chapter 5, ‘Case Study: Inside: Life in Children’s Homes and Institutions’ and Chapter 6, ‘The Projects’). They are also recognised as being enclosed units that have a definitive topic, a finite amount of visual and textual content, and established stakeholder and organisational structures. This boundary is reaffirmed by the fact that, although the exhibitions have travelled outside of their original locations, their content and aims, for example, remain the same. The epistemological approach by Stake (2009) and Polanyi (1966, 1998) to case studies have parallels within a design research context with questions of design knowledge related to ‘designerly ways of knowing’ (Cross, 2001), or what designers ‘do, know and say’ (Kimbell, 2011, 2012). Polanyi (1998) distinguishes types of knowledge as being propositional or tacit. Propositional knowledge is defined as being that which is ‘interpersonally sharable’, and is gained through interactions and observations of objects and events. Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, is ‘all that is remembered somehow’ without words or symbols, but rather, allows us to ‘recognise faces, to comprehend metaphors and to “know ourselves”’ (Stake, 2009, p. 21). These definitions are important to the case study method.
Combined with the CHaSSMM Model, the data collection and analysis has been cognisant of the potentiality of one to affect the other. For example, a project’s background information on the central issue or stakeholders can be more shareable than specific cultural nuances, even though both can have a significant impact on representation. Kimbell (2012) offers up two frameworks through which to examine design activity: design-as-practice (descriptions of design thinking drawn from what designers do within their embodied, situated routines) and designs-in-practice (understanding design through the ways in which its artifacts become part of social processes). The case studies within this research follow this path: by recognising, firstly, that design is a practice embodying both propositional and tacit knowledge, and that, secondly, both design as a practice and its subsequent artifacts can have a deep and lasting impact upon social contexts. The approach clarifies why examining both the practices and outputs of these cases can lead to a better understanding of the nature of difficult exhibition design.

Methods for data collection and analysis included the use of open interviews of curatorial and design professionals, which were recorded and transcribed. These interviews were supplemented with additional data, including textual information, artifacts and images relating to the history and stakeholders of projects, and site visits to the exhibition. To place these cases within the larger context of the difficult exhibition field, site visits were also conducted to a range of difficult exhibitions, including the 9/11 Memorial and Museum (2018) in New York, The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (2018) in Yerevan, the Disobedient Objects exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum (2018) in London, The Imperial War Museum (2018b) in London, The Churchill War Rooms (2018a) in London, and The Australian War Memorial (n.d) in Canberra. Virtual site visits were undertaken when it was not possible to visit sites in person. These included the War and Women’s Human Rights Museum (2018) in Seoul and the WAM: Women’s Active Museum on War and Peace (2018) in Tokyo. Other opportunities arose to informally discuss projects with museum and design professionals in New York, London, Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney. These allowed for more candid interactions, and presented an opportunity for reflection on my own practice in the context of the wider professional field. In order to gain a different type of insight into exhibition design practice, I also undertook a 3-month internship at the Powerhouse Museum’s design department in Sydney in 2013, which provided some valuable experience within a large exhibiting organisation.

4.6.2 Ethnographic and autoethnographic observation

An important part of this study has been to observe both my own practice and that of other professionals within the context of difficult exhibition design. This has required methods in ethnographic and autoethnographic observation to be included. Crouch and Pearce explain that the role of the ethnographer in this process is complex, as it’s not feasible to reproduce the entire experience or context of a particular culture. Researchers, therefore, ‘…must take into account the particular perspective from which they are to understand the culture they observe, and maintain a reflexive stance as they engage in the interpretation and representation of the culture’ (2012, p. 89). These observation methods were also included in autoethnographic observations of my own practice, and developed and articulated through the CHaSSMM Model (Chapter 3), which guided project data collection and interpretation for the case studies (Chapters 5 and 6), and the Tacit Response method to support design practice (Chapter 6).

Other methods were implemented within this project to support the case studies and ethnographic/autoethnographic data collection and interpretation. These included the close reading and rich description of exhibition-related artifacts and documentation, and the development of design briefs as a method for guiding project-specific data collection.

4.6.3 Design practice methods

As stated above, the CHaSSMM Model became an important method for data collection and analysis that is specific to the difficult exhibition context. Further to the 3x3 and Reflexive Circuit models for analysis that are detailed in Chapter 3, CHaSSMM also guided the development of documents and methods to support design interpretation and practice. These methods, which take their theoretical basis from CHaSSMM and involve the identification
of binary opposites within testimonies and designer responses, are used together to assist in revealing both a project’s and an individual’s ideological position, as well as the tacit understandings the designer has gained in relation to them. These methods are explained in more detail in Chapter 6.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the design of this research project. It has explained its qualitative, epistemological, ontological, theoretical and methodological approach, as well as outlined key methods used in the collection and interpretation of data. However, this research project is not only about the collection and interpretation of data, but primarily about design practice within the difficult exhibition context. To this end, this chapter has also explained methods that have been developed specifically for this project, based on the CHaSSMM Model of Analysis and its theoretical foundations. Across all of the areas mentioned above, a bricolage approach has provided a valuable scaffolding. It has allowed me to drive the research from a question-first perspective, enabling a more representational study of the multi- and transdisciplinary nature of difficult exhibitions and their complex culture, assmeblages and ideological approaches. In the next chapter, I will examine an exhibition by the National Museum of Australia, which will be followed by Chapter 6, which outlines the four exhibitions that have been pivotal to this study.
Today, the Government of Australia will move the following motion of apology in the Parliament of Australia.

We come together today to deal with an ugly chapter in our nation’s history.

And we come together today to offer our nation’s apology.

To say to you, the Forgotten Australians, and those who were sent to our shores as children without your consent, that we are sorry.

Sorry–that as children you were taken from your families and placed in institutions where so often you were abused.

Sorry–for the physical suffering, the emotional starvation and the cold absence of love, of tenderness, of care.

Sorry–for the tragedy, the absolute tragedy, of childhoods lost—childhoods spent instead in austere and authoritarian places, where names were replaced by numbers, spontaneous play by regimented routine, the joy of learning by the repetitive drudgery of menial work.

Sorry–for all these injustices to you, as children, who were placed in our care.

— Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, address at the apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, Great Hall, Parliament House, Canberra, 16 November 2009 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009).
5.1 Introduction and overview of chapter

This chapter will examine the exhibition, *Inside: Life in Children’s Homes and Institutions* (Arthur & Chynoweth, 2011). The purpose of this case study is to gain a deeper understanding of difficult exhibitions by examining a project that sits outside both my own design experience and current available literature. In this regard, this study provides a comparative example to my own design practice, as well as addressing a gap in literature that examines how designers and curators work together to resolve project-specific challenges. Another purpose of this case study is to employ key aspects of the CHaSSMM Model, allowing it to be implemented outside of the design process in order to understand how an existing exhibition’s ideological framework is performed. This is supported by the use of the case study methods outlined in Chapter 4.

This chapter will begin with a more detailed explanation of the case study approach and an overview of why this particular exhibition was its object. It will then examine the structure behind the exhibition team, including the stakeholders and team members, in order to understand its ideological aims, before going on to describe and analyse the exhibition’s design approach from a multimodal, social semiotic perspective. This chapter will close with a concluding summary.

5.2 The case study approach

The selection of *Inside* as a case study was based on Stake’s boundaries of specifics (2009) and Merriam’s notion that cases are bounded systems (2009): that is, a case study needs to be within the boundaries of such things as time, place, events, processes or activities (Crouch & Pearce, 2012). This project’s research questions provided a guide for establishing initial boundaries: it was important to focus on a project that sits within the genre of difficult exhibitions, has a range of stakeholders across the government, community and/or private sectors, and could provide valuable examples of curatorial and design collaboration. It was also essential to choose a case that provided a diverse collection of semiotic resources across a range of modes.

5.3 Methods

In considering the methods to be used in the collection and analysis of data for this case study, I return to Merriam who explains that, as bounded systems, cases are less about methodological choice, and more about what is to be studied (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). As such, the methods used to gather data follow this study’s overall bricolage methodology, and give precedence to qualitative, rather than quantitative data. For example, many of the methods employed in the gathering of this data take their cue from the ethnographic tradition: rich description, open-ended interviews, and the textual analysis of supporting documentation (Crouch & Pearce, 2012). However, it also acknowledges the value of Crouch and Pearce’s argument that, within design research, methodological choices are shaped by the need to know the particularities of the case. An ethnographic approach, for example, can offer some valid insights into exhibition design practice, but in order to address ‘the complex assemblage’ of design, it is also necessary to examine other contextual elements such as materials, production processes and stakeholder input.

As methods of data analysis have been based upon this study’s CHaSSMM Model, the case study is broken up into distinct areas of interest. The first area examines the background of the project from a critical hermeneutic perspective: What were the issues that saw the exhibition’s creation? Who were the stakeholders involved in the project and who provided funding? Answers to these questions are sought through an examination of background documents from stakeholder organisations, as well as through an analysis of transcripts from interviews conducted with key exhibition team members. The second area of analysis examines the multimodal semiotic resources employed within the exhibit, and what significance this had in helping curators and designers to achieve their project aims. This includes an examination of exhibition content, including images, objects, spatial elements and the typographic treatment of direct testimony and contextual information.
5.4 About the exhibition

Case Study: *Inside: Life in Children’s Homes and Institutions*

Exhibitor: The National Museum of Australia (NMA)

Curators: Dr Jay Arthur (Head Curator) & Dr Adele Chynoweth (Co-Curator)

Designer: Freeman Ryan Design (FRD)

Exhibited:
- National Museum of Australia, Canberra (16 November 2011-26 February 2012),
- Melbourne Museum (29 August 2013-27 January 2014),
- Western Australian Maritime Museum (14 March-29 June 2014),
- Queensland Museum, Brisbane (9 August-16 November 2014)

5.4.1 Introduction

*Inside: Life in Children’s Homes and Institutions* is an exhibition that brings to light the stories of some of the estimated 500,000 Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in Australia who grew up in out-of-home care during the 20th Century, a number that is considered to be the highest in the developed world (Chynoweth, 2014). Of these children, around 50,000 were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, and a further 7000 were from Britain or Malta, brought to Australia through child migration schemes (National Museum of Australia, 2013). The exhibit was the realisation of Recommendation 35 of the Senate Report on Forgotten Australians (Parliament of Australia, 2004b) and was extensively lobbied for by the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. The exhibition was created by the National Museum of Australia (NMA) and funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), and was opened at the NMA in Canberra on 16 November 2011, the second anniversary of the National Apology (National Museum of Australia, 2013).

17 Other estimates suggest that between 1922 and 1967, Britain sent almost 100,000 of their ‘excess’ children to Australia. Although there were attempts to inform the British government of the appalling conditions at institutions such as Fairbridge Farm and the Christian Brothers’ home, Bindoon, both in Western Australia, there was a complete failure on behalf of both the Australian and British governments to investigate or put stronger protections for children in place (Berg, 2009).

18 With the change of Australian government in 2013, FaHCSIA was renamed the Department of Social Services.

5.4.2 Documents & artifacts

This case study has consulted an extensive collection of documents and artifacts, as guided by the CHaSSM Model of Analysis. These include the Parliamentary Senate Inquiry reports into the Forgotten Australians and Child Migrants, government documents relating to the national apology to this community, stakeholder websites and archives, and background documents from the National Museum of Australia and the National Library of Australia’s Oral History Project. Artifacts from the exhibition have also been examined, which included a site visit while it was on display at the Melbourne Museum in 2013, and a collation of supporting materials, such as the exhibition booklet, the *Inside* blog, and the section dedicated to the exhibition on the NMA’s website. Further to this, interviews were conducted with the Head Curator, Dr Jay Arthur, Co-Curator, Dr Adele Chynoweth and Exhibition Designer, Ms Susan Freeman, from Freeman Ryan Design.

5.4.3 Rationale for exhibition

*Inside* has its roots in the Parliamentary Senate Inquiry into the ‘Forgotten Australians’, and its subsequent report, ‘Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children’ (Parliament of Australia, 2004b). According to the advocacy group, the Alliance of Forgotten Australians, the inquiry enabled many who had been within the Australian institutional care system to tell their stories, often for the first time. ‘This brought their experiences back to them and caused great pain for them and their families’ (Alliance for Forgotten Australians, 2010). Submission number 2220 to the inquiry, prepared by Leonie Sheedy OAM, co-founder of the Care Leavers Australia Network (CLAN), pleaded for the government to ‘Let our histories be visible’ (National Museum of Australia, 2013, p. 1). As a result of the inquiry, then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Leader of the Opposition Malcolm Turnbull gave an official apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, and earmarked funding to support the creation of the *Inside* exhibition.


20 The Committee received 440 public submissions and 174 confidential submissions.
5.4.4 Defining Care Leavers

While not all people who grew up in institutional care identify themselves as ‘care leavers’, it has been the term adopted by organisations such as CLAN and the Care Leavers Association (UK). According to CLAN, the term ‘care leaver’ refers to ‘people who grew up in what was called “care”, outside of our families, but who now have left that “care”’ (Care Leavers Australia Network, 2015a). The Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) prefers the term ‘Forgotten Australians’ because it is ‘least likely to give offence’ (Harrison, 2008, p. 4). The AFA define Forgotten Australians as people who are survivors of the institutional care system. Many Forgotten Australians are now middle aged or elderly (Harrison, 2008).

In order to signify those people who identify as being Forgotten Australians or Child Migrants, this study will employ CLAN’s use of the term ‘care leavers’, although in doing so, still acknowledges the complexity of this community and the various ways in which they identify themselves collectively and individually. The terms ‘Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants’ will also be used where more appropriate.

The reasons why children were placed into institutional care were varied. According to CLAN (2015b), some parents put their children into care voluntarily if some disaster befell the family: the death of a parent, desertion, or physical or mental illness. By preemptively placing their children in care, many parents held out hope that they were not losing their children irrevocably, which was often the case if the ‘welfare’ stepped in and the children became ‘wards of the state’. The NMA (n.d-a) also listed some of the main reasons children ended up in care from the 1920s to the 1980s. They include:

- families who had to give up their children due to poverty;
- family breakdown caused by factors such as domestic violence, alcoholism, illness, the trauma of war or the lack of social support networks;
- single parent families, created through war, death, desertion, prison and divorce, who without adequate government support had to give up their children;
- children of unmarried mothers, at a time when the social and economic pressures for these women to relinquish their babies was enormous;
- children of parents judged as unfit by state authorities, and with no other guardian the state considered suitable, these children were then declared ‘wards of the state’;
- children who were considered to be ‘exposed to moral danger’;
- children who were runaways or considered ‘out of control’;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, many of whom had been removed from their families as part of the assimilation policies of the time;
- British and Maltese children brought to Australian institutions under child migration schemes, some were sent from institutions in those countries, but others were sent by their families with the promise of a ‘better life’;
- children placed in ‘care’ voluntarily by their families—the law required families to contribute money towards their children’s upkeep.

What’s important to note about the experiences of care leavers is that, although not all children were subject to abuse, the system failed them on multiple levels because it was under resourced and lacked proper scrutiny, resulting in homes that were unsafe (National Museum of Australia, n.d-a). In their submission to the Inquiry, CLAN stressed the importance of acknowledging that all children who grew up in such ‘care’ were abused. ‘Children’s Homes of this long era were an instance of what is now called “systems abuse”. That is, they constituted a system of care which actually harmed the people for whom it was intended to care’ (Care Leavers Australia Network, 2003, p. 14). This systematic neglect could be perceived as a symptom of more ingrained social and political attitudes that created the need, both perceived and actual, for children to be placed in care. For example, there was little political will to create a social safety net that would allow children to stay with their parents if illness or poverty was the root cause. This was most tellingly articulated by Prime Minister Robert Menzies, who, on 22 May 1942, said: ‘...to say that the industrious and intelligent son of self-sacrificing and saving and forward-looking
parents has the same social desserts and even material needs as the dull offspring of stupid and improvident parents is absurd” (National Museum of Australia, n.d-b, image 25 of 48). Significant changes to healthcare and social security did not take place in Australia until the Whitlam government introduced sweeping reforms between 1972-75. These reforms included the creation of the Medibank universal healthcare system, pensions for widows and single mothers and benefits for ‘lone fathers’ (The Whitlam Institute, 2015).

The Australian government made a formal, national apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants on 16 November 2009, and in doing so, accepted responsibility for its failings to this community. In addition to the formal apology, FaHCSIA also provided funding and support for a number of other initiatives, which, along with the Inside exhibition, included the Find and Connect service (Find and Connect, 2011) and the ‘Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants Oral History Project’, undertaken by the National Library of Australia (NLA), which worked closely with the NMA’s exhibition team (National Library of Australia, n.d; National Museum of Australia, 2012; Parliament of Australia, 2004a).

At long last someone is listening to us. At long last we can talk about the events that happened to us.


5.4.5 The stakeholders: Community and government

The Inside exhibition had numerous community and government-based stakeholder organisations playing a significant role in the development of the exhibition. In addition to the funding body, FaHCSIA, (to whom the museum reported, but was given relative development autonomy), government organisations involved with the project also included the National Library of Australia (NLA) and the Australian National Maritime Museum (ANMM).21

As the care leaver community is a disparate and complex one, it was necessary for community consultation to be far-reaching. FaHCSIA created the National Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants Consultative Forum with the view that they would provide advice on the creation of the Find and Connect service and Oral History Project, as well as the Inside exhibition. It brought together a range of advocacy groups, including the larger organisations such CLAN, the AFA, the Child Migrant’s Trust (CMT), and the Association of Former Child Migrants and their Families (AFCMF). However, for the creation of Inside, the curators would eventually seek a wider range of voices that would include smaller care leavers advocacy groups, as well as individual care leavers that choose not to align themselves with any group at all.22

The idea of democratising the voices of the exhibition did not come about right away. In fact, as co-curator Adele Chynoweth explained, the initial stages of the project included some controversy over which sections of the care leaver community would be included:

[Head Curator Jay Arthur] was really only interested in the Stolen Generation, so it was a real source of tension for me because I accepted the job on the basis that I would be working on an exhibition that [drew] attention to historical class discrimination in welfare policy as identified in the Forgotten Australians report. I arrived to find that my boss emphasised a race-based view. Acknowledging the Stolen Generations is of course crucial, but there were gallery spaces devoted to this in the Museum already. The issue of class in Australia is largely ignored in Australian public discourse because there is an assumption that we are a classless society. I assumed that this project was the chance to bring awareness to a chapter in history that had been ignored. The tension was that I had to push for this agenda in the workplace, despite the fact that this agenda had been commissioned by the Government. The marginalisation of class in wider Australian culture was being played out within the Museum (Chynoweth, personal communication, 3 September, 2015).

21 The ANMM produced an exhibition that specifically looked into the history of the child migrants schemes of the UK and Malta, titled On Their Own (Australian National Maritime Museum, 2013).

22 In an email further elaborating upon the structure of funding and stakeholder engagement in the exhibition, Jay Arthur (2016) wrote:

Although the exhibition was funded by FaHCSIA for [Forgotten Australians and Former] Child Migrants, we also included the Stolen Generations, as Indigenous children were in the same homes at the same time as the other children (and some of our careleavers identified as both). So in the intro area we had three panels with a heading for each—Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations. However, once ‘inside’ we did not label the children as belonging to any category—given that these categories have been developed long after they grew up…Shared history is still not easy to tell.

23 A draft of this chapter with Chynoweth’s comments was emailed to Jay Arthur to allow her to respond its contents. While Arthur did provide some editing clarifications, all of which have been included in this final draft, none were related to Chynoweth’s comments (Arthur, personal communication, 22 July, 2016).
Having extensive experience as a curator working with the Indigenous community on the issue of the Stolen Generations (Arthur, 2009, 2010), Arthur’s initial focus on the Stolen Generation can perhaps be better understood as being, at least in part, the result of a museological culture of research, perhaps akin and informed by university practices. However, it raises some important questions about the role of the museum in creating difficult exhibitions, and whether the academic function behind exhibiting is taking precedence over the potential social benefits or external project guidelines. Moreover, this initial tension could also be viewed as a response to a lack of institutional knowledge on the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, as, according to Chynoweth, there was simply no knowledge within the museum to draw on about this community (Chenowyth, personal communication, 3 September, 2015). This also brings into sharp relief the importance of all exhibition team members having a reflexive approach to the individual and institutional knowledge and structures that determine which care leavers, representationally speaking, ‘make the cut’.

Despite this initial tension, however, the project resulted in a wide range of voices from the care leaver community, and the democratisation of care leaver voices did become central to the project. This was important not only for the wider community to gain some awareness of what happened to them as children and how it continues to affect their adult lives, but also to address what Arthur describes as a way of ‘getting back to that question of “no one believed us”’ (Arthur, personal communication, 18 November, 2013). In fact, it was the nation’s collective ignorance of the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants that could often cause further stress for care leavers within society. Many face homelessness, drug addiction, and mental and/or physical illness, and accessing services can be difficult. ‘They go to a doctor and people say, “well, you weren’t in homes, only Aboriginal people were in homes, you’re lying,’” explained Chynoweth (personal communication, 3 September, 2015). The expansion of voices within the consultation process became an important vehicle for knowledge building, which, through the exhibition, could be passed on to the general public.

What was perhaps one of the most important aspects of the consultative processes, however, was that it became a path for building trust between the museum and the care leaver community, and according to Arthur, this was paramount to the success of the project (personal communication, 18 November, 2013). With a longstanding distrust of government and with many of their members having minimal education, their disenfranchisement was deeply felt. One of the mechanisms for addressing this was the creation of a blog, published by the NMA, which allowed community stakeholders to tell their stories during the exhibition’s development (National Museum of Australia, 2011).

By providing this platform for care leavers, they were shown that they were being listened to and believed (Arthur, personal communication, 18 November, 2013; National Museum of Australia, 2011a). However, it was also important that the curatorial team took responsibility for selecting which personal testimonies were to be included. As Arthur explained, members of the community had a tendency at times to lash out at each other. ‘One woman left Australia when she was 17 because she’d had such a hideous experience. She was sexually abused by her father, so they put her in a reformatory’ (Arthur, personal communication, 18 November, 2013). However, because the woman left the country at such a young age, Arthur was concerned that the inclusion of her story in the exhibition could draw criticism from the advisory committee, who could potentially dismiss her experiences as not being as valid as others because she didn’t stay ‘at the barricades’. ‘It was a bit nerve wracking because I knew they would object, but I knew it wasn’t right to submit people’s personal comments to this kind of committee. They knew the approach, they knew we were using personal comments, but I felt I couldn’t run them past them because, like most traumatised communities, they [could be] pretty awful to each other’ (Arthur, personal communication, 18 November, 2013). In other words, the building of trust between the museum and the community also had to be extended between the museum and individual care leavers, and this required the curators to make decisions that at times did not include consultative committees.

24 Jay Arthur explained that there were few restrictions placed on people when they were telling their stories on the blog. ‘What we said to them was, “you can say anything on the blog, as long as it’s not libelous”. And so we had to monitor it, but it was really important because they said, “I can say that I was raped,” not by Brother so and so, but “I was raped by the Christian Brothers Home,” or “I was beaten while I was at the Salvation Army Home.” They could mention the home, but not the actual person who did it’ (Arthur, personal communication, 18 November, 2013).
The consultation process also became a valuable vehicle for building knowledge about the care leaver community, and responded to the need for NMA staff to see the project as means of addressing a living history that has been suppressed within the national Australian narrative. Chynoweth explained that, unlike most other NMA exhibitions that can rely on in-house knowledge from experts in a range of fields, no one knew anything about the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants within the organization, and there were no objects. To address this, Chynoweth would eventually speak with over 200 individual care leavers, in addition to her interactions with the larger advocacy groups and FaHCSIA (Chynoweth, personal communication, 3 September, 2015b). What is interesting to note is that this process of knowledge gathering had a fundamental impact on the development of the exhibition’s design and content. As the number of interviews with care leavers grew, so too did the wealth of material from the stories they told and the style of language they used to recount their memories. ‘I found some of the language to be quite poetic, so I started writing it down. Then I would say to Jay, “isn’t that just amazing? Doesn’t this express it better than an object can?”’ (Chynoweth, personal communication, 3 September, 2015). These quotes became an important part of the exhibition, and helped to relay these raw, difficult stories in a way that was moving, respectful, and, through the design, harnessed the curatorial aims.

Examining the stakeholders who were involved in the development of Inside reveals the complexity of the community that this difficult exhibition represented. The care leavers who engaged with the exhibition’s curators not only offered up their personal stories, but also personal objects—arguably without which, the project would not have succeeded. It also leads to a deeper understanding of the role of government agencies and the museum itself, and the ways in which they responded to the community, both in terms of interactions through the advisory committee and other groups and individuals, and in their final decisions relating to the content of the exhibition. Through an examination of this content, the exhibition’s role in representing the community to the general public, and how it becomes a means of performing ideology in the world, is made more explicit.

5.4.6 Exhibition design: Overview

The principle firm hired to design the Inside exhibit was Freeman Ryan Design (FRD), a Sydney-based firm that specialises in exhibition design (Freeman Ryan Design, n.d). Arthur and Chynoweth also brought in the installation artist, Julie Gough, under the title of co-curator.25 As the principle of FRD, Susan Ryan explained that the design brief evolved along with the project. However, because the curators had been so deeply immersed in the exhibit’s material, they were able to provide some key guidelines from the outset (Freeman, personal communication, 16 December, 2013). For example, Arthur was able to provide very clear directions regarding the spatial arrangement of the exhibit into its three sections, which were to be treated differently in terms of their size and ‘feel’. Additionally, the curators presented the concept of reducing or increasing the ‘volume of the voices’ of the museum, institutions and care leavers. These became key jumping-off points for the designers.

5.4.7 Exhibition spaces and content

The Inside exhibition was organised into three main thematic spaces: (1) ‘The Way In’, (2) ‘Inside the Gates’, and (3) ‘Outside the Gates’ (National Museum of Australia, 2013). Table 1 provides a more detailed overview of these thematic spaces, along with a rudimentary semiotic inventory of their objects, testimonies and other resources. While this inventory is not exhaustive, it does provide an indication of the wide variety of modes used to convey the overall narrative of the exhibition.26

‘The Way In’ contains a range of artifacts that helped to convey how children were committed to and processed into the system. These included such objects as the ‘Committed to an Institution (Boys)’ rubber stamp, used when the court made rulings for a child (Figure 13), and ephemeral artifacts that made the recollected memories of care leavers visible (Figure 14).

25 The decision by Arthur and Chynoweth to hire Julie Gough was at first a controversial one, and met with resistance from the section of the NMA that is responsible for project management of exhibitions, which is separate from the curatorial team. According to Chynoweth, the NMA has a list of design firms that it has approved for the outsourcing of exhibition design projects. As Gough was not on this list, she was hired under the title of ‘co-curator’ (Chynoweth, personal communication, 3 September, 2015).

26 Photographs of all objects included in the exhibition (excluding testimonies and audio-visual elements), can be viewed at National Museum of Australia (n.d-c).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Semiotic Resources</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Way In</td>
<td>Introduction to exhibition, experience of a child entering an institution, Museum voice, care leaver voice, institutional voice.</td>
<td>Reception sign, donation box, fundraising buttons, court documents, police documents, migration documents, family photos, artwork, old signage, bible, personal testimonies, personal items (dolls, father’s award), video archival footage, iron gate, subdued lighting, open to confined space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside the Gates</td>
<td></td>
<td>Artefacts including a bell, safety pin (for ill-fitting clothing), tambourine from a Salvation Army home, photographs of sections of various homes, including bathrooms, dormitories and play areas, internal signage, correspondence between parents and homes, personal testimonies, items of clothing, wire gate, artwork from care leavers, baby’s cot, audio testimonies, dim lighting, confined space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Narrative is broken down into 6 categories (left) to explain the range of experiences children went through. Predominantly care leaver voices, but also institutional (baggage tags).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bedtime</td>
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<td>Work &amp; School</td>
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<td>Meals</td>
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<td>Trauma</td>
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<td>Locked Up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outside the Gates</td>
<td>Adjusting to the outside world after leaving the home; historical background and contemporary issues, overview of exhibition. Care leaver, museum and institutional voices (predominantly contemporary government).</td>
<td>Artwork by care leavers, personal testimonies, contemporary photographs of care leavers, personal artefacts including an Indigenous club and hand woven dream catcher, a suitcase, quilt, official apology and flag, brighter lighting and more open space.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apology &amp; Unfinished Business</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Stories</td>
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<td>Historical Overview</td>
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<tr>
<td>About the Exhibition</td>
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A collection of official documents was also included in this section: court notices that ordered the removal of children from their homes and deemed them wards of the state (Figure 15), correspondence regarding the removal of children from Aboriginal reserves, and documentation regarding children to be placed into the migration scheme. These documents were placed alongside photographs of children being escorted from the Children's Court (Figure 16), photographs of the façade of some children's homes, and artifacts from homes themselves, such as reception signs and charity donation boxes (Figure 17). These artifacts and documents contributed to the narrative of the exhibition in a variety of ways. Documents, for example, provide evidence of the government’s role in the systematic institutionalisation of children. Objects such as the donation box provide a range of discourses: on one hand, it alludes to the often chronically under resourced institutions that housed the children, while another discourse speaks of the social stigma of being ‘charity cases’, which many children keenly felt (National Museum of Australia, n.d-b). It can be argued, however, that the most important role of these objects was to provide evidentiary support to the personal testimonies of the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, addressing the principal issue that they had not been listened to or believed for so many years (Arthur, personal communication, 18 November, 2013).

As can be seen in Figure 18, Figure 19 and Figure 20, ‘The Way In’ has been spatially designed to evoke for visitors a feeling of foreboding similar to that experienced by many of the children when they were processed into the system, by requiring them to begin in an open, well-lit space, but not be able to see beyond this point until they step beyond the gate.

After passing through ‘The Way In’, visitors enter ‘Inside the Gates’, which is broken down into further thematic categories: Play, Bedtime, Work & School, Meals, Trauma & Locked Up. As Arthur explained, this section became a focused way to address the fact that so many of the children had not been listened to, and to highlight that ‘this was their time to tell their story’ (Arthur, personal communication, 18 November, 2013). This was conveyed via the almost exclusive inclusion of stories from care leavers, purposely leaving out those from family or staff.
Figure 16 (top) Nun from order of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd escorting a girl from the Metropolitan Children's Court, Albion Street, Sydney, 25 October 1963. National Museum of Australia (n.d-b), image 21 of 48.

Figure 17 (bottom) Fundraising collection box, Ballarat Orphanage, Victoria. Courtesy Gold Museum, Sovereign Hill Museums Association. Photo: Katie Shanahan, NMA, image 30 of 48.

Figure 18 (top) Inside exhibition entrance (National Museum of Australia, n.d-e, image 1 of 54).

Figure 19 (centre) Reception sign and museum introduction, ‘The Way In’. (National Museum of Australia, n.d-e, image 12 of 54).

Figure 20 (bottom) ‘The Way In’. Dramatic shadows are cast on the space by the old gate, the space narrows, and light is dimmed. (National Museum of Australia, n.d-e, image 11 of 54).
The one exception to this was the inclusion of a Senate Inquiry footnote regarding Brother Murphy, which operated to legitimise the testimonies relating to him (see Figure 21, Figure 22, Figure 23, and Figure 24).

‘Inside the Gates’ reflects a kind of ‘organised chaos’, made more powerful by the combination of typographic treatments and the claustrophobic, dark space. Objects range from the tender recollections of children who had good experiences (Figure 25) to the brutal objects of physical and/or emotional abuse (Figure 26 and Figure 27). Other objects, such as the ‘Bunny Club’ map of where to avoid paedophile priests, epitomise the difficult nature of the exhibition by asking visitors to understand the realities some of the children lived with. They demonstrate the manner in which objects and text were arranged, and reflect the multiplicity of voices as they recall their institutionalised childhoods (Figure 28, Figure 29, Figure 30 and Figure 31).

Emerging from the contracted darkness of ‘Inside the Gates’, ‘Outside the Gates’ offers a wider and brighter space that contributes to the narrative of children emerging into the outside world. Included is a range of objects, including artworks from care leavers, contemporary images, and testimonies relating personal experiences upon leaving the homes (see Figure 32, Figure 33, Figure 34 and Figure 35). Also added to this space is a quiet area where visitors can write their thoughts, watch videos and reflect (Figure 36).

The spaces of the exhibition can be better understood through the social semiotic concept of framing; that is, what exists within a frame and what is potentially outside of it can both contribute to meaning making (van Leeuwen, 2005). For example, the suggested ‘inner world’ awaiting the visitor is framed by ‘The Way In’, while ‘Inside the Gates’ not only invokes feelings of claustrophobia by nature of what lies within the frame (or space), but is also reinforced by the knowledge that a more expansive space exists ‘Outside the Gate’–and we need not see it to know that it is there. Alluding to this oppositional force is enough to intensify a visitor’s understanding of a child’s disconnect with the outside world, and we are called upon to share in their feelings of loneliness and isolation within. Likewise, ‘Outside the Gates’, rather than merely suggesting a new found freedom and opposition to being ‘inside’, is striking in its allusion to the inexperience so many care leavers had with the outside world and how to live in it.
What was outside the frame became as important to potential meaning making as its interior, and is a testament to the contradictions that still exist between the public’s perception of institutional care and many children’s actual experiences. It’s a stark and necessary reminder that the post-institution lives of many care leavers are complicated by a combination of social, emotional and physical challenges. By breaking up the exhibition into the three spaces, the curators and designers aimed to create an atmosphere that represented the perspectives of the children based upon their experience of being processed into the system, their lives confined within the homes, and their eventual discharge as they were either adopted out or ‘grew out’ of the system.

Other semiotic resources, such as colour, played an important role within the exhibition’s design as well. Freeman explained that, rather than replicating the interiors of institutions, a carefully chosen selection of greys was employed to represent the bland, institutional colour palette, and was done so with the aim of also evoking emotional responses from visitors (see Figure 37 and Figure 38).

While the space and colours played an integral role in helping to create the emotional affect the curators and designers were aiming for, it is the use of typography within *Inside* that brings the stories of the Forgotten Australians and Child Migrants to life. However, having established that there was going to be a visual cacophony of voices within an enclosed, claustrophobic space, there was some initial controversy within the curatorial team as to how these voices would be conveyed. Adele Chynoweth explained that she felt strongly that what was central to the exhibition was ‘…not objects, but people and their narratives’ (Chenoweth, personal communication, 3 September, 2015). For the project to be successful, she argued that the more traditional museum approach that valorises objects, or the ‘object, text panel, object, text panel’ pattern, be challenged. ‘Design is discourse, design is content, semiotics and so on. So design is as much telling the story as it is about framing objects, and there was a lot of resistance to that idea’ (Chynoweth, personal communication, 3 September, 2015). As co-curator, Gough became a vehicle for helping the curatorial and design team to communicate the aims of the project more effectively, particularly when it came to translating narrative into design. ‘I think Freeman Ryan did a fantastic job, and they...
Figure 27 Left: A box of ‘Precious Promises’ and quote from Priscilla Taylor (National Museum of Australia, n.d-c, image 22 of 41).

Figure 28 (bottom) “Bunny Club” map, 2011. Courtesy Owen Swallow, Yarra View Training Farm, Lilydale, Victoria, 1960s. The red crosses show where the boys would hide from paedophile Brothers. The boys said they belonged to the ‘Bunny Club’ because they knew where to hide. Dormitories 2 and 3 held the orphaned and mentally disabled boys. This is where most of the abuse occurred. (National Museum of Australia, n.d-c, image 25 of 41)

Figure 29 (Opposite top left) ‘Inside the Gates: Bedtime’ (National Museum of Australia, n.d-c, pp., image 29 of 54).

Figure 30 (Opposite top right) ‘Inside the Gates: Trauma’ (National Museum of Australia, n.d-d, image 16 of 54).

Figure 31 (bottom) ‘Inside the Gates: Bedtime’ (National Museum of Australia, n.d-d, image 30 of 54).
Somebody Must Know

Something About Me.

Mary Mearen
Telegraph, UK, 25 February 2010

The boy from Ballarat Orphanage navigated the streets of London wide-eyed and knew how Magellan felt when he reached the Pacific.

Frank Golding
Ballarat Orphanage, Ballarat, Victoria, 1950s

My mother, passed on five months or six months prior to my finding out that she had been alive all those years.

Why was I told that she was dead?

Why was I told that she had been killed during the war? All I have left is this photograph and a death certificate.

Submission, Community Affairs References Committee, 2001
Methodist Children's Home, Chelsea, Victoria, 1950s

Figure 32 (top) ‘Outside the Gates’ (National Museum of Australia, n.d-e, image 15 of 39).

Figure 33 (centre) ‘In 1953, Frank Golding won a trip to the Queen’s coronation in London. He returned, not only to Australia but to his family, after 10 years in the orphanage. Ticket on loan from Frank Golding’ (National Museum of Australia, n.d-e, pp., image 10 of 39).

Figure 34 (bottom) ‘Outside the Gates’, quote from a submission to the Community Affairs References Committee, 2001.

Figure 35 (top) ‘Outside the Gates’ artifacts, including protest notes and a banner that lists every home that was mentioned in the inquiry (National Museum of Australia, n.d-d, image 50 of 54).

Figure 36 (bottom) ‘Outside the Gates’ reflective space for visitors (National Museum of Australia, n.d-d, image 51 of 54).
were really open to it,’ added Chynoweth. ‘[But] so long as we’ve got mainstream museums like the NMA saying you can only use museum designers, we’re denying ourselves a language and process by which we can translate trauma into semiotics’ (Chynoweth, personal communication, 3 September, 2015).

Freeman explained that they went on to break some exhibition design rules for the first time. ‘We went above what we normally would have as the standard eye line...we went well up and well down, and well sideways of it, so that when you see them as panels, you know, it is quite confronting’ (Freeman, personal communication, 16 December, 2013). In other instances, they wrote on the glass that was used to house some objects. ‘That would be something that in any other exhibition would be called bad design, but in this instance, it was quite deliberate so that we could have a kind of slightly eerie effect’ (Freeman, personal communication, 16 December, 2013).

Typographic design within the exhibition became a central mechanism for creating a distinction between the ‘voices’ in the exhibition, as well as their ‘volume’. For example, it was possible to distinguish the voice of the museum by taking advantage of some of the established design norms within museum exhibiting: a neutral sans serif typeface that takes a visual ‘back seat’ to objects (see, for example, the reception sign in Figure 19). This style of labeling is similar to the one put forward by Svetlana Alpers, who argues that objects, once placed within the exhibition context, are then subject to ‘the museum effect’: that they essentially become works of art, there for looking at and interpreting, and that labeling and even educational content should be kept to a minimum so as to not ‘interrupt and discourage looking while in the museum’ (Alpers, 1991, p. 31).

In the case of Inside, however, utilising the established norms of the exhibition genre reinforced a distinction of the museum’s voice from others within the exhibit. It’s also important to remember that, while the museum voice was kept to a minimum overall, it was practically non-existent in the section, ‘Inside the Gates’. Arthur explained that there were no conventional introductory or story panels that outlined the different themes of ‘Bedtime’, ‘Meals’, etc., once inside this section. ‘We wanted the voice from “inside” to be that of those who grew up “inside”’ (Arthur, personal communication, 22 July, 2016). The more traditional panels reappeared in section 3, ‘Outside the Gates’.

The institutional voice was conveyed through the text that accompanied objects that were used by homes, courts, or other organisations that played a role in the institutionalisation of children, in the form of ‘typed archival labels’ that resembled baggage tags. This created a connotation of the archival nature of this process, the institutionalisation of children and their possessions, and the impersonal way in which many were treated (Figure 39).
The design of the care leavers’ voices was the most complex and diverse of the typographic arrangements. Arthur explained that she wanted the voices to appear as if they are graffiti on a wall because it is ‘...so often the voice of the voiceless and the oppressed’ (Arthur, personal communication, 22 July, 2016). By having disparate arrangements of the testimonies in terms of placement, size, and typeface variation, some of them appeared as a whisper, others almost shouting (Arthur, personal communication, 18 November, 2013). Designers within the team at FRD went to great lengths to ensure that many of the testimonies did not have a commercial typeface ‘look’ by writing them instead by hand (Freeman, personal communication, 16 December, 2013). The aim of this was not only to allude to the individuality of each care leaver, but also to the historical or social contexts surrounding them. For example, Mary Brownlee’s testimony is set in an older style of cursive writing, providing a connotative historical reference (Figure 41). Valda Hogan’s literacy levels are alluded to though the misuse of capitals and lowercase letterforms, reflecting the fact that she ‘...learned to read and write when I was nearly 50...’ (Figure 39). Godfrey Gilmour’s testimony is written in a hand script that alludes to a child just learning to write: the cursive style is only just forming, and brings together the linguistic message (that he was just a child) with the visual mode of its representation (Figure 42). Others have been set in pre-designed typefaces, such as that of Ken Carter (Figure 43). The sharp serifs seem to visually reinforce the brutality of his experiences. ‘Work, floggings...floggings, work was my whole life at the homes’ (National Museum of Australia, 2013, p. 24).

Of course, not all of the care leavers approved of the way in which their stories were represented. According to Arthur, one care leaver complained that the handwriting was not hers, and so viewed it as being dishonest (Arthur, personal communication, 18 November, 2013). While her point is quite valid, it would no doubt have been both financially and logistically prohibitive to collect each testimony in the handwriting of individual care leavers.

However, it does serve as a reminder of the mimetic nature of exhibiting, and the responsibility curators and designers have in the creation of representations of people and their stories. Within difficult exhibitions this becomes even more pressing. Inside was a unique opportunity for the Australian Government, via the NMA, to educate Australia about the past wrongs inflicted upon a staggering number of its children, and by representing the complexity of voices within this community through its typographic design, encourages an emotional connection between ‘child’ and visitor. It would be interesting to note if the testimonies had been set in the same type as the ‘museum voice’ whether they would have had the same impact on visitors, or provoked the same controversy from stakeholders. Be that as it may, the effect was powerful, personal and in many cases, reminded this visitor that although the recollections are from people who are now adults, they are memories from the perspective of a child.
5.5 Concluding summary of *Inside: Life in Children’s Homes and Institutions*

The above case study has employed some key aspects of the CHaSSMM Model as a method of analyzing an exhibition that falls outside of my own practice, and in this regard, has been a useful path for framing questions alongside case study methods. One of the most exciting aspects to this is how this study has been guided, firstly, by the question of understanding ideological positions, and secondly, how that ideology was performed via multimodal semiotic resources: what they were, how they were adapted and created, and what meaning potential they had. The case has provided the opportunity to examine the work of other teams within a difficult exhibition context, and is a somewhat unusual case in that there was no existing expert knowledge within the museum to draw from. This required the curators and designers to spend an extraordinary amount of time researching the issues and getting to know the stakeholder community; they had to first understand before they could practice. There has also been an uncovering of power structures within the museum’s professional body and important moments of resistance to it, which shaped not only the exhibition team, but the way testimonies were displayed and the important role they had alongside objects. As such, the complexity of background information, stakeholder engagement and organisational politics is vitally important to understand, as it has a significant role in how representations forge the discourses that shape knowledge. CHaSSMM has also been useful in examining the potential emotional affect in visitors via an analysis of spatial relationships, content, and the use of colour and light to evoke emotional responses. Having attended the Melbourne iteration of the exhibition, I can confirm it is a heavy burden to bear, but an important and deeply moving one. It encourages you to step into a world you would rather not enter, consider the life of a child, one individual at a time, and to demand better.

There can be no doubt that *Inside: Life in Children’s Homes and Institutions* was a vitally important mechanism for educating the public about the experiences of the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, and that it played an important role in giving a voice to care leavers, who, for so many years, had not been listened to or believed. The systematic abuse of such a large number of children is indeed a ‘difficult’ idea for a country to come to know about itself, particularly considering that, where such knowledge did exist,
abuses were too often willingly covered up by many in positions of power. What
the analysis of an exhibition such as Inside can tell us is that, firstly, difficult
exhibitions play a vital role in representing communities and their stories of
trauma, and not only have a deep impact upon those particular communities,
but also upon the wider society in which they live. Inside has revealed a
complex array of stakeholders, a multi-faceted design team with divergent
views on how the narrative of the Forgotten Australians and Former Child
Migrants should be presented to the public, and some of the limitations of the
established museum exhibition genre in presenting that narrative as semiotic
discourse. This case has also revealed the importance of understanding the
ideological positions of those who created and are represented in the exhibition:
the historical apology in 2009 by the Commonwealth Government, the
diversity of ideas expressed by the care leaver community and the exhibition
team members, and how those came together to express those ideologies
through a multimodality of semiotic resources. These called upon visitors
to emotionally respond to the experiences of care leavers, and with new
knowledge, potentially change the way the public interacts with care leavers
in their everyday lives. The exhibition’s spatial arrangements and contents
merged together to become a complex and yet unified collection of multimodal
semiotic resources that were employed to perform the exhibition’s ideology
of social justice for the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

No child should suffer as much as this.
– Sebastian, Age 11 (Museum Victoria, 2014)

I am so sorry for ever saying ‘it’s in the past, get over it,’ ‘I didn’t do it, why should
I pay!’—I now understand my ignorance to these horrific occurrences. My compassion
is at large thanks to this display.
– Anon age 18 (Museum Victoria, 2014)
6

The Projects

Introduction and supporting website

This chapter provides details on the design of four difficult exhibition projects that have made up the practice-led component of this research. Across the four projects, different stages of the CHaSSMM Model have been implemented in conjunction with a focus on a particular aspect of design practice, allowing for an iterative development of theory and models of practice through practice. The exception is stage 5, which has been earmarked for further research, and therefore sits outside the scope of this study. The chapter will begin with an overview of the exhibiting organisation, PROOF: Media for Social Justice, and my role as Creative Director. It will then provide details of the four difficult exhibition projects that trace specific key points in CHaSSMM’s 3x3 and Reflexive Circuit models: background information, stakeholders, project aims, exhibition content, design brief development, methods of interpretation, design iterations and design outcomes. Additional methods of practice, also based on CHaSSMM and developed with the aim of creating critical distancing within practice, are also explained (Table 2 provides more details). This is followed in each case by a critical analysis of the project and suggestions for further research before this chapter concludes.

This chapter is designed to be read in conjunction with the research project’s website, which documents each case study in its own section. Where applicable, documents such as design briefs, background information, production notes and interpretive documents have been uploaded, in addition to images of the exhibition panels and location shots. The URL to the site is: https://www.ligaturesoflife.com/
6.2 About PROOF: Media for Social Justice

PROOF: Media for Social Justice is a non-profit organisation that uses ‘visual storytelling and education to inspire action on human rights’ (PROOF: Media for Social Justice, 2018g). Based in New York City, it was founded in 2006 by Executive Director, Leora Kahn, a long-time photo editor, documentary producer, and human rights advocate, whose aim was to bring together the skills and experiences of internationally-renowned photojournalists to work on projects for social good (PROOF: Media for Social Justice, 2018c). Although it is a small organisation, it has a broad reach: by 2017, its Annual Report estimated that over 2 million people had visited its exhibitions worldwide (PROOF: Media for Social Justice, 2018a).

PROOF’s ideological focus is on the promotion of ‘upstander’ behaviour: individuals who stand up against injustice within their communities. Its aim is to create projects that engage ‘the broader public in conversations about human rights, peace, and justice through moving first-hand testimonies and powerful photo narratives’ (PROOF: Media for Social Justice, 2018c).

Exhibitions are created in conjunction with various educational events, including symposiums, conferences and workshops. In developing its projects, PROOF undertakes a range of tasks that include the ethical collection of testimonies, portrait photography, and the development of educational resources, all of which contribute to a project’s narrative. To accomplish this, PROOF has developed a network of photojournalists, activists, and scholars who work collaboratively on projects.

While each project has its own specific thematic focus, the underlying ideological aim of the organisation is ever-present. PROOF recognises the value of combining the heroic narrative of the upstander alongside more difficult content as a way of providing a path for positive change, while at the same time, raising awareness of the project’s issue. Table 3 lists a number of PROOF’s projects in more detail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT</th>
<th>3X3 STAGE/S</th>
<th>REFLEXIVE CIRCUIT</th>
<th>INTERPRETIVE DOCS/METHODS</th>
<th>RESEARCH FOCUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BROKEN?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING &amp; COMMUNICATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNEARTHED</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>DEVELOPMENT OF DESIGN &amp; PRODUCTION BRIEFS FOR ORGANISATION KNOWLEDGE SHARING, COMMUNICATION &amp; INTERPRETATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE RESCUERS</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
<td>TACIT RESPONSE METHOD (TRM)</td>
<td>DEVELOPMENT OF INTERPRETIVE DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT DESIGN PROCESS: IDENTIFICATION OF IDEOLOGY WITHIN TESTIMONY &amp; TACIT DESIGNER RESPONSES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FERGUSON VOICES</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</td>
<td>FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF TRM + TALLIES</td>
<td>FURTHER DEVELOPMENT &amp; TESTING OF TRM TO SUPPORT DESIGN PRACTICE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exhibitions are created in conjunction with various educational events, including symposiums, conferences and workshops. In developing its projects, PROOF undertakes a range of tasks that include the ethical collection of testimonies, portrait photography, and the development of educational resources, all of which contribute to a project’s narrative. To accomplish this, PROOF has developed a network of photojournalists, activists, and scholars who work collaboratively on projects.

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**THE LEGACY OF RAPE AND MY BODY A WAR ZONE**  
Widespread use of rape as a weapon during times of armed conflict. Campaigns at the grassroots, national and international levels against impunity.

- Columbia University Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality
- War Art Reporting and Memory (WARM) festival, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (as “My Body a War Zone”).
- International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Yale University
- Art Museum of the University of Magdalena, Colombia
- Santa Marta, University of Los Andes, Colombia
- 11th International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights, Geneva, Switzerland
- The Missing Peace Symposium at the United States Institute of Peace, Washington D.C
- Eastern Congo, American Bar Association Legal clinics

**CHILD SOLDIERS: FORCED TO BE CRUEL**  
Campaigns against the conscription of child soldiers into armies and militias.

- Deutsche Welle, Berlin
- Capitoline Museum, Rome, Italy
- Bonn Kunstmuseum, Bonn, Germany
- United Nations, NY
- Powerhouse Gallery, Brooklyn
- NHK Tokyo
- Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan

**UNEARTHED: STORIES OF SURVIVAL IN THE FACE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE**  
Campaigns against rape as a cultural norm in India and for reform to the justice system in India. Highlights the role of upstanders. Has a section that raises awareness of poor urban planning in reducing safety.

- Deutsche Welle, Berlin
- Capitoline Museum, Rome, Italy
- Bonn Kunstmuseum, Bonn, Germany
- United Nations, NY
- Powerhouse Gallery, Brooklyn
- NHK Tokyo
- Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan

**I DON'T FEEL PROTECTED': HUMAN RIGHTS IN NEW YORK CITY**  
Climate change, LGBTQI rights, racism and immigration (Picture Justice program)

- United Nations International School (UNIS), NY

**BROKEN?**  
Criminal justice system in New York, in particular mass incarceration and inequalities in the justice system.

- United Nations International School, (UNIS), NY
- Photoville, NY

**FERGUSON VOICES: DISRUPTING THE FRAME** (Moral Courage Project)  
Ferguson protests following the shooting of teenager Michael Brown by Ferguson police officer, as told by a people who were there.

- University of Dayton, OH
- Roesch Library, OH
- Dayton Metro Library, OH
- St. Louis Public Library, MO
- St. Louis University, MO
- Newark Public Library, NJ
- Phillips Exeter Academy, NH
- Denison University, OH

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I began designing exhibitions for PROOF in 2008, with the first iteration of *Picturing Moral Courage: The Rescuers*. My role for PROOF expanded in 2010, when I became Creative Director, responsible for the organisation's visual communication. This included the review of all backend system integration, as well as a brand update, and the design of annual reports, education materials and promotional campaigns. In addition to this, I have also designed over 15 exhibitions in a range of languages for 7 different projects, four of which are the subject of this study. This extensive design experience, quite specific to difficult content, has strongly enforced for me the importance of emotional affect as a mechanism for change—for designers as well as audiences. By engaging with difficult knowledge in design practice, I have also been challenged emotionally and intellectually. There are times when I have sat at my desk and cried, unable to unsee, unread or unlearn, things I have struggled to understand. By entering into these difficult knowledge processes, I have joined visitors in the pedagogy of affect, and acknowledged this as an important part of design processes and interpretation. However, it also reinforced the need for methods that encourage a critical distance from self, in order to avoid the risk of becoming a mere ‘passenger in a driverless vehicle’, led by unchecked and tacit emotional responses. This critical approach also drew on my training as a journalist, which encourages the probing of facts surrounding events, the possibility of multiple perspectives, and the fostering of objectivity while acknowledging subjectivity. The CHaSSMM Model became an important foundation for the development of methods of practice that address these challenges within difficult exhibition design practice, enabling me to redraw my tacit responses into an explicit form, and employ them towards the design of semiotic resources that perform the project’s ideological basis. The next four sections of this chapter explore this in more detail.
6.3 Project 1: Broken?

Year: 2015-2016
Displayed: United Nations International School (UNIS), Manhattan (2015); Fortune Society (2015); Vera Institute of Justice (2016); Photoville, Brooklyn (2016)
Project Web Page: https://www.ligaturesoflife.com/broken/

6.3.1 About: Background, stakeholders, aims

Broken? is an exhibition that resulted from PROOF’s 2015 and 2016 Picture Justice (PJ) programs, an educational workshop series for high school students in New York that was developed in partnership with the UNIS. The project received funding and/or in-kind support from:

- Brooklyn Community Bail Fund
- Good Shepherd Services
- Brennan Centre for Justice at the New York School of Law
- Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)
- The Osborne Association
- The Brotherhood/Sister Sol
- Witness to Mass Incarceration
- The Fortune Society
- Democracy Now!
- American Friends Service Committee
- Vera Institute of Justice
- Police Reform Organising Project (PROP)
- Centre for Constitutional Rights
- Hour Children

The program’s aim is to foster upstander behaviour in young people, while teaching them skills in ethical interviewing techniques, portrait photography and visual communication. The theme of the exhibition is the ‘Criminal Injustice’ System of New York state, with a particular focus on the issue of mass incarceration (PROOF: Media for Social Justice, 2018d).

6.3.2 Content and brief

The content of the exhibition included photographs taken by the students of the PJ program, as well as testimonies from interviewees and contextual background information on the criminal justice system in New York (Wahlin, 2015b). In 2016, some additional panels were added to the exhibitions, and a number of existing panels were updated. Table 4 provides more detail on the content of the exhibition.

The curators drew on a wide range of people for the exhibition’s content, including former inmates, young adults who have family members in prison, and individuals who undertake advocacy work within the criminal justice system. The exhibition was printed on synthetic fabric banners, which was the first time this kind of material had been used for a PROOF exhibit. All of the exhibition’s content can be viewed on the project’s website, as well as an embedded booklet that accompanied the exhibit, and images of the exhibition on display.
Table 4 Contents of Broken? exhibition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PANEL #</th>
<th>SPECIFIC ISSUE</th>
<th>IMAGE</th>
<th>TEXT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to theme (Justice system of New York)</td>
<td>Stakeholder logos</td>
<td>Overall introduction to theme of exhibition, PJ program, information on stakeholder organisations (PROOF and UNIS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>History of Picture Justice (added in 2016)</td>
<td>PJ logo, PROOF logo and UNIS logo, logos for other stakeholder organisations</td>
<td>Background on the PJ program, information on PROOF and UNIS, list of project staff (program directors, curator, designer and photography instructors) and list of student contributors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Racial Disparities in the War on Drugs</td>
<td>Photograph of ‘Easy’, former drug addict and inmate.</td>
<td>Background information on the laws that lead to racial disparity in the sentencing of offenders, particularly in relation to crack cocaine vs cocaine. Quote from Easy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>‘The New Jim Crow’</td>
<td>Photograph of ‘Hubert’, an advocacy worker.</td>
<td>Background information on the laws (War on Drugs and ‘get tough’ policies) that lead to higher rates of incarceration, as well as afford people the stigma of being ‘second-class citizens’ upon release. Quote from Hubert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>‘Guilty of Being Poor’</td>
<td>Photograph of ‘Mario’, former inmate (2015).</td>
<td>1. Background information on the laws relating to bail and the high proportion of people being incarcerated because they are too poor to pay bail. Quote from Mario (2016).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(panel updated in 2016).</td>
<td>Photograph of Rikers Island Prison (2016).</td>
<td>2. Background information on Rikers Island Prison and the proportion of inmates who are being held because they cannot afford bail. Quote from Bryan Stevenson from the Equal Justice Commission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>‘15 Days to Social Death’</td>
<td>Photograph of Rachel Meeropol, Senior Staff Attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights.</td>
<td>Background information on the psychological affects of solitary confinement. Quote from Rachel Meeropol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>‘Fast Track to Adulthood’ (2015 and updated in 2016).</td>
<td>1. Photograph of former inmate and youth advocate, ‘Tyrone’.</td>
<td>Background information on the laws within New York State that allow teenagers of 16 and 17 to be tried, sentenced and jailed as adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Photograph of former inmate (wrongly accused and later committed suicide), ‘Kalief’.</td>
<td>1. Quote from Tyrone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Quote from Kalief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>‘34,000 Beds’</td>
<td>Photograph of ‘Mirza’ and her daughter.</td>
<td>Background information on the growing number of people being held in immigration detention. Quote from Mirza.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>‘Restorative Justice’</td>
<td>Photograph of former inmate, ‘Vityoa’.</td>
<td>Background information on the system’s focus on punishment, and its alternative, restorative justice, which works to ‘heal, not punish’. Quote from Vityoa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>‘Women Behind Bars’</td>
<td>Photographs of former inmates ‘Evie’, ‘Yokanda’ and ‘Velmia’.</td>
<td>Background information and statistics on the rate of women incarcerated in US prisons, why they are there and percentages of women with small children. Quote from Evie.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(added in 2016).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>‘Fixing What is Broken’</td>
<td>Photographs of Lewis’ (American Friends Service Committee) and ‘Hernan’ (Vera Institute of Justice).</td>
<td>Background information on the growth of campaigns seeking to reform the laws that lead to mass incarceration. Quotes from Hernan and Lewis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>‘Re-Invest in People’</td>
<td>Photograph of ‘F’, The Osborne Association.</td>
<td>Background on long-term incarceration as a response to recidivism rates, vs programs that help to rehabilitate and provide support, training and mentoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>‘Broken Windows Policing’</td>
<td>Photograph of two NY Police Officers (faces not shown).</td>
<td>Background on the ‘Broken Windows’ policing policy, which targets minor crimes as a way to establish authority. Quote from Robert Gangi, Director of the Police Reform Organising Project (PROOP).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3.3 Context and material of display

Broken? was originally designed to be displayed at UNIS’ Manhattan campus, a school for K-12 students with a curriculum based on the guiding principles set out by the United Nations that affirm ‘the fundamental value of diversity in the education of our future leaders, activists, and innovators’ (United Nations International School, n.d.). The display space is a walkway with glass walls that surrounds one of the student lounges (see Figure 45). The audience in this first location was made up predominantly of the student body and teaching staff of the school, with very few visitors from the general public.

During the production planning stages of this project, no floor or wall plans were available, making it challenging to understand how the exhibition would be hung. There were other important factors regarding the context of display that, like the floor and wall plans, were important to know but not communicated. For example, the walls on which the exhibition would hang were glass, which meant that light would shine through the material panels. These walls also had existing graphic decals, which resulted in some visual conflicts with the exhibition.

Figure 45 Display of Broken? at UNIS in 2015. Photo courtesy of PROOF.
Broken? was not solely designed for UNIS, however, but also to travel. This required it to have the flexibility and durability needed for transporting it to and displaying it in other locations. One of these was Photoville in 2016, a public photography exhibition set up in shipping containers within Brooklyn Bridge Park, Brooklyn (Photoville, 2016). Most of PROOF’s projects travel, a factor that, when combined with extremely tight budgets, presents a variety of challenges in their design. Broken? presented an opportunity for us to explore alternative options for exhibition materials, and to test whether a material substrate would ship well both physically and economically. It proved to have both benefits and shortfalls: when handled well, the fabric proved more durable that other materials, such as pop-up stands or Corflute® Sheet, and when packed up together could be easily transported across shorter distances within New York. However, when the fabric panels were not rolled up properly, they became creased, and were heavy as a unit, which made them comparable to other exhibition materials when it came to shipping and handling across longer distances. In terms of print quality, the panels would be ideal for distance viewing (such as hanging banners), but less so for an exhibition, as the ink bled into the fabric resulting in a slightly blurred appearance, compromising the legibility of the text elements at closer proximity.

6.3.4 Systems of communication and output: Organisational analysis

Broken? is unique when compared to the other three projects of this study. Being first of the four projects, the aim of this case was to focus on understanding existing organisational structures and systems that related to project management and knowledge sharing within PROOF’s difficult exhibitions projects. At the time of this project, the CHaSSMM Model was still in its early stages of development. Nevertheless, it was instrumental in both analysing organisational communication and knowledge sharing, and the development of a design brief template specifically for difficult exhibitions, both based on the following line of questioning:

- How do we share project-specific information?
- How do we communicate curatorial and design intentions?
- Do we have a method for articulating tacit knowledge?
- How are meetings conducted?
- How are problems resolved?
- How are projects managed?
- How do we test design iterations?

Communication was identified as being largely informal and irregular, via Skype and email due to our different international locations. There were no formal structures for documenting project-specific information. Through this preliminary examination of project communication, it was possible to identify where communication could prove ineffective. For example, while email trails could be referred back to, verbal communication had previously been a key factor in project information being mismanaged, resulting in miscommunication and at times contradictory directions. Based on this information, a design brief template was sent to the curator and program director as a digital PDF form.

The brief’s questions were also based on early CHaSSMM Model development, with questions aimed at drawing knowledge from other team members, gathering information on the stakeholders, background information, the aims of the project, educational aspects, and content. Unfortunately, not only was the digital form not completed, but the Word document that was returned included minimal information at best (both of these documents are available for viewing on the web page for this project). With the value of a design brief not fully understood within the exhibition team, it demonstrated a lost opportunity within the organisation for the explicit sharing of knowledge. This in turn made the interpretive processes within design more challenging, particularly during the early stages of conceptual development. One reason stated for the failure to return the PDF form was a lack of time, which, considering the small size of the team, was understandable. However, by the time Broken? was complete, there was a substantial organisational shift in the perceived value of the design brief, and this would prove beneficial to future projects.
6.3.5 Design interpretation and outcomes

Initial design concepts for Broken? focused on the idea of ‘freedom’ being something that can be given or taken away by the criminal justice system. I began exploring the idea of a bird as being both commonly associated with prison inmates (the ‘jail-bird’) and also representative of the idea of freedom (Wahlin, 2015a). I initially explored two different visual approaches to this concept. The first, an origami-style illustration with custom-designed font, linked the project to the concept of freedom. The orange colour, which was going to become fluorescent, represented prison clothing (see Figure 46) (Wahlin, 2015b). The second approach used an ink look, based on an illustration of a bird that appeared as being ‘shot down in mid-flight’. The ink also doubled up as having a connotative connection to the process of fingerprinting (see Figure 47). These initial designs provided a visual reference to communicate interpretive design ideas with the curator; up until this point, there had been only one definitive curatorial direction for the design, and that was ‘no barbed wire’ (Wahlin, 2015a). The first round of logos revealed an important difference between the curator and myself in terms of the bird’s connotative meaning potential, which, according to the curator, could be perceived as insulting to former inmates in the U.S. After further discussions, we focused on the processes of incarceration, suggested by the ink bird, and agreed to make this central to the design. We also agreed that the design should take a cleaner, more contemporary direction, avoiding a ‘grungy’ or vintage look, in order to avoid connotations of ‘the seedy world of crime’ (Wahlin, 2015d), which we felt could undermine the testimonies of some participants (see Figure 48, for example).

With a clearer direction for the design, the second round of logos were created (Figure 49). The tag line for the exhibition was later discarded, which meant that the logo had to work effectively on its own to convey meaning (Figure 50). The logo provided an important visual direction for the rest of the exhibition, forming the basis for additional graphics such as the pattern of fingerprints used for the background of the panels (Figure 51) (Wahlin, 2015c). The typographic elements of the exhibition also took on characteristics of the logo, with all panel headings and background information set in the same typeface (‘Futura’). However, quotes from interviewed people were given a different typographic treatment, and this was discussed at length with the curator. We both wanted a visual differentiation between the voice of the exhibition and that of the interviewees, and I experimented with a variety of handwritten-style fonts (Figure 52). Initially, we explored the option of giving each person their own font, but this reduced visual unity when the panels were placed together. Eventually we settled on one typeface for all of the quotes, ‘vincHand’. This was chosen for overall legibility and, being both angular and curved, it avoided overt connotations of being male or female. An underlying grid structure supported the layout of all panels (Figure 53).

6.3.6 Reflections and conclusion
Figure 48 (top)
Example of early fingerprinting by William James Herschel, 1859–1860, for research purposes.

Figure 49 (centre)
Second round logo concept, with tag line.

Figure 50 (bottom)
Second round logo concept, without tag line.

Figure 51 (top)
Additional graphics: fingerprint pattern created for the background of exhibition panels.

Figure 52 (centre)
Detail of exhibition panel type, with Futura (left) and vincHand (right), representing the exhibition’s voices.

Figure 53 (bottom)
Panel grid structure. This had to be slightly varied for some panels that contained more text.

If there are other approaches to justice, someone will seek them toward healing; our system aims to rehabilitate offenders and mend the relationships between offenders, victims, and communities. It asks: Who is the method that needs more attention? And what can be done here? Restorative justice programs, such as mediation and dialogue, have been highly successful in lowering the recidivism rates among juvenile offenders and other successful interventions in incarceration.

Stories from Inside the Criminal Justice System

not necessary to replace civilized and merciful methods of rehabilitation those it supersedes. In fact, the two times a person spends in prison, the greater the chance of recidivism. According to psychiatrist, author of Just Money, "mass incarceration has created a culture of despair and hopelessness that actually feeds violence and criminality."
Broken? proved to be an immensely useful project in terms of reviewing organisational systems as well as my own design practice. Having already worked with PROOF for a number of years, during which time I had attempted to instigate a range of methods for project management, Broken? revealed that, despite this, there was still no agreed upon project procedures that worked for all of the team. While the final design of Broken? achieved the aims of the project and the vision of the team, it was also compromised by unnecessary issues, including a lack of organisational systems that supported clear project documentation. Based on an early, prospective CHaSSMM Model framework and with a particular focus on understanding project-specific ideology, the resulting analysis led to the conclusion that PROOF’s project weaknesses were most pronounced in the areas of communication, knowledge sharing and project management.

Approaching Broken? from the perspective of the CHaSSMM Model enabled me to propose a new way of compiling project information with specific reference to the challenges of difficult exhibitions. This was implemented in our next project, Unearthed: Stories of Courage in the Face of Sexual Violence—this time with the full cooperation of the rest of the PROOF team.

6.4 Project 2: Unearthed: Stories of Courage in the Face of Sexual Violence

Year: 2015
Displayed: India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, India
Project Web Page: https://www.ligaturesoflife.com/unearthed/

6.4.1 About: Background, stakeholders, aims

Unearthed: Stories of Courage in the Face of Sexual Violence is an exhibition that campaigns against rape as a cultural norm in India, and calls for changes to the justice system. Survivors of rape become victims three times over: of their perpetrators, the police who often fail to act, and the communities who shame and shun them (PROOF: Media for Social Justice, 2018f). Across the country, the culture of rape has become so pervasive that it has sparked a range of protests, most notably following the violent gang rape and murder of an Indian woman on a New Delhi bus in 2012 (PROOF: Media for Social Justice, 2018f). With the aim of harnessing this surge of community-based action, representatives from local organisations—the National Foundation of India, Breakthrough TV and the Centre for Social Research—contacted PROOF after learning about
The Legacy of Rape project (PROOF: Media for Social Justice, 2013), requesting that a version of the exhibit be made specifically for the cultural context of India. In addition to these organisations, photographers Paloumi Basu and CJ Clark’s crowd-sourced photo-documentary project, The Rape in India Project, also became part of Unearthed. This project highlights the role that poor urban planning plays in the creation of unsafe places for women and girls, and had its own section in the exhibit, titled ‘The Places of Rape’.

6.4.2 Content and brief

The production management and interpretation of the design of Unearthed were shaped by the CHaSSMM Model, in particular, the first stage of the 3x3 model and stages 1 and 2 of the Reflexive Circuit (Figure 55, Figure 56, and Figure 57). It focused on gathering key information that could make explicit the ideological framework of the project, as well as a complete list of all semiotic resources that were to be provided prior to design.

It is noted that extensive design briefs are often part and parcel of interpretive design projects (for example, see Roberts and Mether (2017)), and these are valuable documents to learn from. However, for such a small organisation as PROOF, time and resources, in addition to the particular scope of a project, factor extensively in determining the length and depth of a brief. This presents a challenge, as information needs to be condensed down into what is considered most important to the project. Based on aspects of the CHaSSMM Model mentioned above, the following information was included in the brief for Unearthed (a full copy has been embedded on the project’s web page):
A project overview: why it was being created
• Background information on its stakeholders
• Background information on the issue central to the project
• Projected/desired outcomes of the exhibition
• Links to further reading
• An entire list of contents delivered from curatorial
• Thumbnails of all images to be included in the exhibit
• Photographs of the exhibiting space
• A complete map of the walls with dimensions a proposed content for each
• An initial collection of colour swatches
• A range of sample Indian illustrations (based on initial concepts)
• All contact information for project staff
• A detailed production schedule

*Unearthed* contained three main sections: ‘Survivors’, ‘Upstanders’ and ‘Places of Rape’. The first two sections contained testimonies and photographic portraits, while the third section contained images and captioned information showing places where rapes had occurred. A full list of the exhibition contents is included on pages 8-10 of the production brief, available on the project’s web page.

### 6.4.3 Context and materials of display

*Unearthed* was designed for the exhibition space at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi and displayed over a two-week period in December 2015. Being designed specifically for this outdoor space, it allowed me to focus on its particular layout and work with materials that travelling exhibits won’t permit, namely, laser cut vinyl lettering and graphics. The space itself was divided by a large wall, and both areas had their own set of stairs that took up almost the entire floor area where the exhibition would be viewed (Figure 58). This had an effect on the hanging of the exhibition, being measured, for example, from the top of the walls instead of the ground. The exhibition’s themes were spread across these two spaces: the first two on the left hand side, the third on the right. The panels for each section were painted in thematic colours prior to bump in, and the vinyl and images installed on site (Figure 59).

### 6.4.4 Processes of interpretation and design

The design and production briefs became the central documents that were referred back to during the design process. The design brief took its initial cue from a discussion with the curator, during which particular mention was made of the bright colours of Indian women’s clothing. This idea was explored as a way of creating a visual metaphor that celebrates the women of India, and balances out the darkness of the topic without undermining its seriousness. The design brief, therefore, not only became an important document for understanding the aims of the project, but also a visual reference in the early stages of design interpretation, enabling more effective communication between curatorial and design. The brief’s colour swatches were initially sampled from the exhibition’s images, which included examples of brightly coloured clothing. These were used as a guide when...
The display space also contributed to shaping meaning within the exhibit. For example, ‘The Places of Rape’ section was contained within its own space, segregated from ‘Survivors’ and ‘Upstanders’. This allowed for a different treatment of the space, employing dark grey walls, metallic silver vinyl and dim lighting to evoke the ‘unsafe’ spaces represented in the grainy, urban images of the Rape in India project. Taking a multimodal approach to the arrangement of the semiotic resources, the aim of this design was to evoke a slightly uncomfortable or unnerving feeling in visitors, and in doing so, contribute to their understanding of poor urban planning from an emotional perspective. This was in direct contrast to the rich, bright colours of the exhibition’s other sections.

The Hindi language in the exhibition became a visual reference for the titles, in particular, its curved shapes, horizontal lines and low ascender height (Figure 60). The typeface ‘Blenny’ was chosen for the English titles because it shared many of these characteristics, as well as having interesting, curved negative spaces within its letterforms. Text was outlined to create vector graphics, and lines were drawn between ascenders (Figure 61). All of the text in the exhibition was designed to be installed as weeded vinyl (that is, laser cut vinyl that is installed directly onto the painted wall panels). Section 1, ‘Survivors’ in a dark brown against a burnt orange wall, and section 3, ‘The Places of Rape’, in metallic silver vinyl against a dark grey wall (Figure 62).

The production document for Unearthed was created specifically to enable clear and concise communication between myself in Australia, the curator in the United States and the production company in India. The emphasis for this document was less on information that would support interpretation, such as partner and project background, and more on information relating to production materials, such as paints and vinyls, the measurements of all
elements, a complete map of the exhibition’s sections as they would appear on the walls, and a detailed production schedule. The creation of this document was also supported by a number of production meetings via Skype and email communication. This gave me the opportunity to confirm certain details before design began, such as the minimum x-height for the vinyl letting to be installed on the wall panels. This is particularly important information in terms of weeding the excess vinyl from around the lettering prior to installation, and is determined by the equipment and experience of the production company.

6.4.5 Reflections and conclusion

The design and production briefs for *Unearthed* proved to be an important step forward in terms of organisational knowledge sharing and project management. From a design perspective, the development of these documents, based on sections of the 3x3 and Reflexive Circuit Models of CHaSSMM outlined above, operated in a similar manner to research questions, helping to guide the initial stages of the project. The creation of the design brief centred on making explicit the ideological heart of the project and which semiotic resources would perform it. To sum: *to address the culture of rape in India and call for greater legal protections for survivors through a series of images, testimonies and information that examined the issue from the perspective of survivors, upstanders, and locations*. With this document available for the project team to work from, the interpretive stage of *Unearthed* was supported by clearer communication, which in turn left more time for considering the space and other semiotic resources, such as lighting, and their meaning potential from a multimodal perspective.

The aim of the production schedule was to share practical details. However, as detailed as this document aimed to be, it omitted one factor that would have a significant impact on the outcome of this project, and that is making allowances for testing. As mentioned above, although the x-height was determined early on and the production brief was sent to the entire team five weeks prior to installation, the production company did not test the x-height they had calculated until one week prior to installation. Unfortunately, they realised too late that the laser cutting and weeding of the vinyl could not be done, and with too little time to redesign all of the text elements, another fix had to be found. The solution was for the text to be printed on vinyl that was as close a colour match as possible to the wall paint, in inks that were a close match to the original vinyl. In my opinion, this had a significant impact on the design: the original intention was to avoid any framing around type, allowing it to sit within a ‘sea of colour’. The large blocks of printed vinyl effectively created frames around the text, compressing it into a much smaller space. Despite this disappointing outcome, the opportunity was taken to reflect upon the production document and how it could be improved for future projects. One possible solution is to incorporate the notion of ‘test early and test often’ (where possible) into schedules, in order to allow time for any necessary design adjustments.

*Unearthed* presented a range of challenges and opportunities for this research. Firstly, because it was specifically designed for the India Habitat Centre, which also contributed its spaces to the meaning-making process, it was possible to experiment with materials that are usually outside the scope of PROOF projects. *Unearthed*’s contribution to this research, however, can be found in the development of design and production briefs, which were driven by the key aspects of CHaSSMM’s 3x3 and Reflexive Circuit Models, detailed above. This project-based development was built upon further in the following project, *Picturing Moral Courage: The Rescuers*, with a focus on interpretive documents and processes.
6.5 Project 3: Picturing Moral Courage: The Rescuers

Year: 2016
Displayed: ArtWalk Port Macquarie
Project Web Page: https://www.ligaturesoflife.com/the-rescuers/

6.5.1 About: Background, stakeholders, aims

Picturing Moral Courage: The Rescuers examines the role of upstanders during times of genocide. Incorporating testimonies and photographic portraits of people from Rwanda, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia and Holocaust Europe, The Rescuers asks visitors, “What would you do?” It does not present genocide as being the product of any one location or time, but rather as an extreme aspect of humanity, one that can be countered by the phenomenon of the upstander: individuals who risk their lives to save ‘the other’, often at great personal risk to themselves (PROOF: Media for Social Justice, 2018e). The Rescuers demonstrates that, across race, gender, and age, the upstander is within all of us (Wahlin & Kahn, 2015).

The Rescuers is a long-standing project for PROOF, and was the first project I worked on with the organisation. Prior to ArtWalk, I had designed The Rescuers in English, Bosnian and English and Khmer and English. It has travelled across the United States, to 13 cities across the Balkans, in metropolitan and rural locations in Cambodia, and displayed at the Jewish Holocaust Centre in Melbourne, Australia (PROOF: Media for Social Justice, 2018e).

ArtWalk Port Macquarie is an initiative of the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, and The Rescuers was shown in its first year, 2016. The aim of ArtWalk, a one-night only event, is to attract people from both within and outside of the Local Government Area (LGA), while expanding the cultural capital of the region. During its first year, there were an estimated 3500 visitors to the town’s CBD. While The Rescuers did not receive any financial support from ArtWalk, the council did supply projection equipment and promoted the event. They did not have any input in terms of content, but were consulted on what the exhibition contains.

6.5.2 Content and brief

The brief for The Rescuers ArtWalk built upon my previous experiences with Broken? and Unearthed. In particular, the development of questions aimed specifically at difficult exhibitions made the compilation of The Rescuers brief more efficient, and proved to be a useful working document throughout the design process. I included some additional points to The Rescuers brief, one of which was a new section that included an overview of my own background. The aim of this was to address CHaSSMM’s aim of fostering a ‘critical distance to self’, for which I articulated my own previous experience with the project as well as my own personal background. Information on previous Rescuers exhibitions was also included, as part of the background on the project. The full brief is available for viewing on this project’s web page.
6.5.3 Context of display

The context of display for The Rescuers ArtWalk not only factored in the event itself, but also the demographics of the Port-Macquarie-Hastings Local Government Area (LGA). As the inaugural event of this kind in the town, there was no data available on estimated visitor numbers or patterns of movement. There was also little information available on the other works that would be on display. As a result, although these would have an impact on the context of display, it was not possible to predict how. This made it important to understand the demographics of the Port Macquarie-Hastings LGA.

The region’s traditional owners are the Birpai people. In 2016, the total population of the area was 78,539, and of those, 3,173 people identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Most of the population was born in Australia, while 11.4% were born overseas, and only 4% of that number were born in countries where English was not the first language. The area has a higher rate of people over the retirement age than any other regional location in New South Wales, with a median age of 48, ten years higher than the state’s median age. In terms of religious beliefs, 63.7% identified as Christian, 2% as non-Christian or unclassified, and 34.2% as non-religious or unstated (ID Community, 2018). To sum, what these statistics show is that the Port Macquarie-Hastings LGA has a population that is older and more homogenous than other areas of the state. An exhibition such as The Rescuers, therefore, presents stories from people and events far removed from the context in which it was shown.

The exhibition was allocated an outdoor space connected to one of the police buildings. This space also had a large gum tree, which, on the night, was wrapped in brown paper with the question, ‘what would you do?’ written on it. The decision to create this opportunity for visitor feedback was largely due to the demographic mentioned above, and also to experiment with ways to encourage people to interact with the exhibition. Markers were supplied for visitors to write their thoughts on the paper (these can be viewed on the project web page). The Rescuers became quite a unique offering within the context of the ArtWalk, as it was the only installation that focused on an issue of human rights and social justice.

6.5.4 Processes of interpretation and design

The design of The Rescuers for ArtWalk presented a range of other opportunities for experimentation within design practice. Firstly, as it was to be shown for only one night, it offered me more creative autonomy than previous projects, and I took the opportunity to experiment with the typographic representations of people’s testimonies in a way that would be relatively unfeasible in other projects. Secondly, as the exhibition was to be projected (a first for PROOF), it introduced some modes of semiotic resources in new or alternative ways, including music, space and texture. Being a projection also had a significant influence on how visitors read the testimonies. With much less time per frame to read, quotes were edited down to only one line per rescuer. Most importantly, all of these factors combined to create an opportunity to investigate how the CHaSSMM Model could be further applied to interpretation within design practice. This principally involved the development of methods to support interpretation within stages 1 and 2 of CHaSSMM’s 3x3 Model (Figure 64 and Figure 65), as well as stages 1-4 in the Reflexive Circuit (Figure 66).
The central aim of what I have called the ‘Tacit Response’ method is to reveal underlying tacit bias through close reading of an exhibition’s semiotic resources. Although this would be developed and used more extensively in the design of Ferguson Voices, *The Rescuers* was an opportunity to flexibly experiment with and test its feasibility as a method for difficult exhibition design projects. The Tacit Response method has two main stages: first, to conduct a close reading of the contents of an exhibition in order to identify where actors sit ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of ideology. In the case of *The Rescuers*, the focus of this was on testimony, and employed a simple binary identification using colour coding of ideology perceived to be either inside or outside of the rescuer’s worldview. Figure 67 shows how Rwandan rescuer Augustine Kamegeri’s testimony revealed these binary oppositions, with pink indicating his own views, and blue showing what sits in opposition to it. Key verbs and other observations are then circled in order to highlight further reader responses.

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**Figure 67** Close reading of Augustine Kamegeri’s testimony, colour-coded to reveal binary oppositions in ideology.

*My name is Kamegeri Augustine.*

I saw was a bunch of people doing and looking for refuge in my house and afterwards helped them to flee to the Congo.

A woman came to my home and asked to be set in – I asked her where she had been since the beginning of the massacres and she said she was hiding in a Hutu neighbour’s house. I asked her why she left and she said to me: “Ask my brother, my Mum and I were wounded by machine guns, a woman helped us and sheltered us in her house.” When we were healed she asked me to work in the sweet potato field. Then one day while I was working, I noticed that my husband was taking to the Kivu Lake to be drowned. I felt scared and ran away. I hid her and others in small forests of trees that killers wouldn’t dare enter. So they would hide in the forest and spend the night among bees.

It is true to certify not to do anything for someone dying right in your sight.

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**Figure 66** The CHaSSMM Reflexive Circuit. The Tacit Response method was designed to specifically address points 1-4.
The second stage of this method is the Tacit Response chart, which was designed to elicit rapid responses immediately following the close reading of a testimony. The aim of the Tacit Response method is not to reveal 'truth', but rather, to reveal the reader's response to materials. Figure 68 shows an early iteration of this chart as it was used following the reading of Kamegeri's testimony (a later version, which included extra space for observations, can be seen in Figure 72 and on the project's web page). There are some key points that I have observed about the use of this chart. Firstly, when completed directly following a close reading of testimony, it allowed me to articulate my understanding of what I had read, helping me to make explicit what was tacit. For example, Kamegeri's testimony revealed a character with a steady authority, a sense of obligation to help others, and whose connection to and knowledge of nature helped him to protect people. Extending these observations to his photographic portrait revealed overlaps in these modes of representation; he is surround by nature, and his gaze, looking directly to the camera at eye level to the viewer, reinforces his calm authority. Alternatively, a close reading of the testimony from Rwandan rescuer, Leonard Kurangiirwa, revealed a character who would not shy away from inflicting violence on others if they posed a threat to the lives of people he was protecting. Extending this again to his portrait, he is shown in a more powerful physical pose. The viewer is positioned ‘below’ him, and a group of people stand smaller in the frame behind him. It was with these observations that I narrowed down the typefaces that would represent their testimonies.

The Tacit Response method allowed for a more careful management of the typographic experimentations within the exhibition. This was extremely important for this version of the exhibition in particular, as the testimonies, being reduced to single quotes, relied more heavily on the typography to add another layer of connotative meaning that referred directly to the rescuer. In Kamegeri’s case, this centred on his connection to nature, and the typeface, ‘Veneer Three’, was chosen for its earthy visual qualities. For Kurangiirwa, I looked for a typeface that had sharp edges with a minimum of soft curves to emphasise his strength of conviction, settling on ‘Violence’ to reflect these visual characteristics. As can be seen in a comparison of the first Rescuers exhibition design (2009, Figure 69) with the ArtWalk (Figure 71), this approach to interpretation had a significant effect on the design outcomes. However, a note should be made about the intention that drove each of these designs: in 2009, I was designing an exhibition for the first time, and my focus was more on the genre of exhibiting and its (perceived) norms. This focused shifted significantly for The Rescuers ArtWalk to issues of representation, and became integral to the interpretive process.
Figure 69 (this page) Original design of the joint panel of Kamegeri and Rurangirwa’s section of The Rescuers (2009).

Figure 70 (opposite top) Augustine Kamegeri’s section of the projected version of The Rescuers exhibition for ArtWalk, Port Macquarie, 2016.

Figure 71 (opposite centre) Leonard Rurangirwa’s section of the projected version of The Rescuers exhibition for ArtWalk, Port Macquarie, 2016.

Figure 72 (opposite bottom) Updated Tacit Response chart, with section to encourage additional observations.
6.5.5 Reflections and conclusion

The design of The Rescuers ArtWalk presented a unique opportunity for design experimentation. Shown for only one night as a projected exhibit with almost no budget, the project's flexibility allowed me to push the boundaries of design, particularly in regards to the typographic representation of testimony. Through this, I was able to develop and test the Tacit Response method in practice. Based on CHaSSMM's aim to to explicate ideological positions and find connections between semiotic resources, this method was instrumental in locating key areas of overlap between testimony and photographic portraits. In the case of Augustine Kamegeri, it was the connection to nature expressed through his testimony and within his photographic portrait that became the main focus of his typographic representation. On the other hand, Leonard Rurangirwi’s testimony and portrait spoke of a more direct, and at times even violent, protector. The hurried sharpness of his typographic representation was chosen for this reason. This method resulted in a more considered approach to the individuals represented within the exhibition, which in turn lead to a more dynamic exhibit when compared to the original from 2009. The Tacit Response method not only proved to be extremely useful in helping me to articulate my thoughts as I came to understand each rescuer’s story, but was also a useful resource to refer back to during design. In the next project, Ferguson Voices: Disrupting the Frame, my aim was to ascertain how useful this method could be when there were more restrictions on the design outcome.

6.6 Project 4: Ferguson Voices: Disrupting the Frame

Year: 2017
Displayed: Various
Project Web Page: https://www.ligaturesoflife.com/ferguson-voices/

6.6.1 About: Background, stakeholders, aims

Ferguson Voices: Disrupting the Frame (Kahn & Pruce, 2017) centres on the stories of Ferguson residents who took part in the protests over the days and months that followed the shooting death of teenager Michael Brown by Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson on 9 August, 2014. The aim of the exhibition is to educate the public about the events of Ferguson, and by extension, the issue of police shootings in the United States. In response to the events in Ferguson in 2014, The Washington Post began collecting data on fatal police shootings, and between 2015 to mid-2018, the number had reached 3,399 (Tate, Jenkins, & Rich, 2018).

Ferguson Voices is part of the Moral Courage Project (MCP), a joint education initiative of PROOF: Media for Social Justice and the University of Dayton’s Human Rights Centre (Human Rights Centre, n.d). MCP gives a face and...
name’ to the notion of moral courage through stories of upstanders, and aims to ‘inspire others to confront injustice in their own communities’ (PROOF: Media for Social Justice, 2018b). Students from the University of Dayton’s Human Rights Centre were trained by PROOF on the ethics and methodology of collecting witness testimony, and teams of students and faculty collected interviews, photographs, and other materials to document instances of moral courage in Ferguson. Ferguson Voices is an exhibition that represents a diverse range of voices from the Ferguson community. In their own words, the activists explain how they contributed, and what motivated them to become upstanders within their community. In doing so, it also offers an alternative to the mainstream media reports on Ferguson, many of which represented the protestors as ‘rioters’ (Conti, 2015; Ferguson Citywalk, 2014; Kurtz, 2014; Pool & de Guzman, 2015; Sreenivasan, 2014). Ferguson Voices opened to the public at the University of Dayton in January 2017, and has since travelled to a range of public institutions, such as the Newark and St Louis Public Libraries and the National Civil Rights Museum.

6.6.2 Content and brief: Independent research

The research and planning for Ferguson Voices was undertaken in a number of stages. In October 2016, I met with members of the exhibition team in New York and Massachusetts. With Curator Leora Kahn, I discussed the aims MCP and Ferguson Voices, as well as practical concerns, such as the project deadline. Together, we also met with Kate Hixon, from Hixon Design, who managed the fabrication of the exhibition, to discuss substrates, footings and panel sizes. There were also opportunities to undertake cultural research while in the US that I would not have been able to do otherwise. For example, Kahn and I attended the off-Broadway show by Anna Dearvere Smith, Notes from the Field (Dearvere Smith, 2018). In this play, Deavere Smith takes aim at the ‘school-to-prison pipeline’, investigating the causes of mass incarceration and its roots in the education system. She wrote:

…the US Justice Department released statistics that show that poor black, brown and Native American children are suspended and expelled more frequently than their middle-class and white counterparts, and that these suspensions and expulsions are directly linked to the likelihood that they will be incarcerated at some point in their lives. Many of the stories I heard about what caused even kindergartners to end up handcuffed were especially shocking, because their deeds sounded a lot like old-fashioned mischief (Anna Dearvere Smith, 2018).

Dearvere Smith wrote Notes from the Field based on interviews she conducted with a wide range of people within the US, from preachers to educators, police officers to parents. She embodies 18 of these individuals within the play, discussing the systemic reasons that lead to mass incarceration and police shootings. A moving and powerful production, Notes from the Field helped me to gain a different kind of understanding of the deeper issues within the US justice system from a wide range of perspectives. On my return to Australia, I continued to research the events of Ferguson independently, with the specific aim of identifying where Ferguson Voices’ organisation-based ideology was situated within the wider debates. I consulted a diverse range of documents, including official reports from government and other research institutes (Rothstein, 2014; US Department of Justice, 2015a, 2015b), full-length documentaries (Pool & de Guzman, 2015) and media reports (Conti, 2015; Kurtz, 2014; Myers, 2014; Sreenivasan, 2014; St Louis Post, 2015; USA Today, 2014), with the aim of understanding the issues outside of the exhibition’s narrative. This research was condensed into the design brief (this can be viewed in full on the project’s web page). At the time of compiling the brief, some of the exhibition’s contents had yet to be finalised. The final contents, therefore, are not listed in the project brief, but can be viewed in Table 5. In addition to this content, the exhibition also encouraged people to listen to the testimonies on their portable devices via a SoundCloud podcast series, a link to which is on the project’s web page.
Table 5 List of panel contents for Ferguson Voices exhibit

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<tr>
<th>PANEL TEXT</th>
<th>IMAGE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Intro Link to Soundcloud Files</td>
<td>Map Graphic with Colour Overlay Sampled from Ferguson’s Photographic Portrait</td>
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<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>Background Map Graphic</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOUNDcloud LOGO</td>
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<td>ABOUT THE MORAL COURAGE PROJECT</td>
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<td>ABOUT PROOF: MUSEUM FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE</td>
<td>Map Graphic with Colour Overlay Sampled from Ferguson’s Photographic Portrait</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABOUT THE HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE</td>
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### 6.6.3 Context of display

Ferguson Voices has been created specifically for a US audience, and this made the research mentioned above even more necessary. Being Australian, I felt it was important to find as many opportunities for reflexivity within practice as possible; there are significant differences between US and Australian culture, most notably in race relations and gun culture, and while I was fortunate to spend some of my time immersed in the US culture before designing began, I still recognised that there are nuances to that culture that I am not part of or understand. The exhibition was also designed to ship, install and uninstall easily, and had to have a degree of flexibility in how it could be set up within a space (images of the exhibition on display in various locations are available to view on the project website). Since its launch at the University of Dayton, it has travelled to four public libraries and three universities before returning to the University of Dayton as part of a conference. Where possible, discussion groups with the people in the exhibition have been organised (St Louis Public Library), so that members of the public can engage with their stories further.

### 6.6.4 Processes of interpretation and design

Within the practice of Ferguson Voices, there was a predominant focus on stages 1 and 2 of the CHaSSMM 3x3 model (Figure 74 and Figure 75), and stages 1-5 of the Reflexive Circuit (Figure 76). It should be noted that although stage 3 of the 3x3 Model is not focused on in detail here, it was considered throughout the design process as an important tool for reflecting upon the possible affective nature of exhibition. An example of this can be seen in the in-team feedback on the initial logo design (see below). In this regard, stage 5 of the Reflexive Circuit also focused on testing and feedback within the exhibition team. Further development of methods of interpretation were also undertaken with the expansion of the Tacit Response sheet as a tool of practice. This included the addition of a final tally of my responses to all testimonies, which can be viewed in Figure 77. This tally revealed where there were a high number of responses, and these were colour coded for easy identification. In addition to these, the co-curators and myself also completed a Tacit Response sheet for the overall project theme. These additions to Tacit Response were implemented to further support the ‘double-ended’ interpretation in stage 4 of the CHaSSMM Reflexive Circuit , as well as provide scope for later developments in comparative analysis of exhibition aims with visitor responses. Interestingly, this tally revealed where I had a 100% response rate.
across all testimonies: ‘deep’, ‘local’ and ‘protection’. Other responses with a high number included ‘urban’, ‘large’, ‘fight’, ‘cooperative’ and ‘peace’. I implemented these within the design process as central key words that drove the exhibition’s visual development. The entire collection of Tacit Response for Ferguson Voices can be viewed on the project’s web page. The combined effect of the research, Tacit Response and title of the exhibition resulted in two distinct directions in the early stages of design. The first idea was to capture the ‘voice’ of the project. This idea came from images of the protestors found during the research stage, and in the very idea of providing a different platform for people to tell their stories. I collected a range of images with protest signs from Ferguson and created individual vector letterforms from them (Figure 78). These I combined to create the first logo for the exhibit (Figure 79).

This logo was unanimously voted against by other members of the exhibition team, as it looked too much ‘like tagging’. The main issue with this was that there was a need expressed by the community to distance themselves from the notions that they were all ‘rioters’. This raised key questions about the possible affective value of the exhibition: if the visual representation of the protestors at Ferguson performs in such a way as to undermine their credibility in the eyes of visitors, could this then reduce the overall impact of the exhibition? Would it reduce the likelihood of visitors feeling empathy, solidarity, or being inspired to act within their own communities? This type of feedback was extremely useful in connecting the design to the cultural context in which it would be shown, and was an important way for stage 5 of the CHaSSMM Model to be introduced. As stated above, PROOF does not have the resources to conduct market research, or to reprint exhibitions. However, by cultivating an opportunity for a project’s collaborators to provide feedback early in the design phase, it’s possible to not only foster the ‘multiperspectivism’ that Kincheloe (2001) advocates, but also mitigate against possibly negative visitor perceptions of those represented.

While the initial idea for this first logo was to use the protestors’ own handwriting to express the idea of ‘voice’, I concluded that if the curators read it as ‘tagging’, it was conveying the wrong connotative message for the project and the community. This in turn could have a profound impact on the potential emotional affect of the exhibition, particularly empathy, as any connotative meaning that had the potential to ‘otherise’ would defeat the purpose of the exhibition, which was to bring together a range of perspectives within the community. I looked again to the results of the Tacit Response, and chose to focus on the 100% response rate for ‘local’, linking it to the ‘Ferguson’ and ‘Frame’ aspects of the exhibition’s name. Figure 80 and Figure 81 show some experiments with this idea (others are available to view on the project’s web page). Figure 82 shows an early iteration of what the logo would become. The Ferguson boundary was drawn in Illustrator from a map of the area. However, I was worried that, with such an irregular shape, it may not be commonly recognised as being the boundaries of Ferguson, and would need additional visual reinforcement. To resolve this, I brought back in the original map, using Photoshop brushes to reduce its opacity unevenly (Figure 83). The vector graphic of the Ferguson boundary was given a stroke and an illustrator brush was used to create the rough effect, expanded and then blended with text that was more restrained, so as to avoid the connotative meanings of the first logo (Figure 84 and Figure 85 in detail). ‘Rift Soft’ was chosen for the logo type, after a series of experiments. A gallery of the logo’s development can be viewed on the project’s web page.

The graphic in Figure 84 became the basis for all of the heading graphics that would appear on the top of each person’s story. Figure 87 and Figure 88 show examples of these. The boundary graphic was also included in other ways throughout the exhibition: as a base graphic for the introduction and about panels in individual colours sampled from key focal point areas of the photographic portraits, and the ‘Tell Us What You Think’ panel. It has also been used in a range of promotional materials for the project: a brochure, education materials, advertisements and slides used during the ‘Reimagine America’ conference in November 2017. A significant number of the logo’s elements, as well as other aspects of the exhibition design, including the boundary graphic, colours and tagline typeface (‘Rift Soft’) have been used in the project’s interactive website (designed by Toky). Through this approach, Ferguson—a place, a ‘frame’ and a community—became central to the exhibition’s design.
Figure 74 (top): Design stage 1 of the CHaSSMM 3x3 Model.

Figure 75 (bottom): Design stage 2 of the CHaSSMM 3x3 Model.

Figure 76: CHaSSMM Model of Analysis Expanded.

THEORY OF MEANING

THE UNDERLYING IDEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT: STAKEHOLDERS & TEAM AND EDUCATIONAL, AFFECTIVE, SOCIAL, CULTURAL.

LOCUTIONARY ACT


RESEARCH & UNDERSTANDING

BACKGROUND RESEARCH, PRODUCTION OF PROJECT BRIEF, INCLUDING ARTICULATION OF STAKEHOLDERS & PROJECT IDENTITY, PROJECT AND EDUCATIONAL, AFFECTIVE, SOCIAL, CULTURAL.

CHaSSMM 3x3 MODEL

DESIGN STAGE 1

THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROJECT’S IDEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK VIA THE EXHIBITION’S ‘SEMOTIC NETWORK’.

‘DOUBLE-ENDED’ INTERPRETATION

‘DOUBLE-ENDED’ INTERPRETATION OF PROJECT WITH ‘DOUBLE-ENDED’ INTERPRETATION OF SEMOTIC RESOURCES PROVIDED TO AND CREATED BY DESIGNER AS ‘PERFORMANCE’ IDEOLOGY. INTERPRETATION OF THE AFFECTIVE, REFLEXIVITY, FEEDBACK AND TESTING.

Figure 76: CHaSSMM Model of Analysis Expanded.

STAGE 1: RESEARCH & UNDERSTANDING: CRITICAL HUMANITIES

• RESEARCH-ENGAGED MUSEUMING OF THE EXHIBITION
• RESEARCH-ENGAGED MUSEUMING OF THE EXHIBITION
• EDUCATION-ENGAGED MUSEUMING OF THE EXHIBITION

STAGE 2: RESEARCH & UNDERSTANDING: SOCIAL SEMIOTICS & MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS

• STUDY OF CONCEPTUAL RESOURCES PROVIDE TO THE EXHIBITION’S ‘SEMOTIC NETWORK’
• ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-PEOPLE DYNAMICS OF RESOURCES USED AND CHANGING SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS.
• METHODS FOR ENGAGING RESOURCES TO THE EXHIBITION’S ‘SEMOTIC NETWORK’ IN THE PROJECT;

STAGE 3: COMBINED ANALYSIS: CRITICAL HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SEMIOTICS & MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS

• CONFERENCE-ENGAGED MUSEUMING OF THE EXHIBITION
• ASSESSMENT OF SEMIOTIC RESOURCES BASED ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE EXHIBITION’S ‘SEMOTIC NETWORK’

STAGE 4: ‘DOUBLE-ENDED’ INTERPRETATION: SOCIAL SEMIOTICS & MULTIMODALITY

• INTERPRETATION-ENGAGED MUSEUMING OF THE EXHIBITION
• DECISIONS ASKED BY RESEARCH ENGAGED MUSEUMING OF THE EXHIBITION’S ‘SEMOTIC NETWORK’
• DECISIONS ASKED BY RESEARCH ENGAGED MUSEUMING OF THE EXHIBITION’S ‘SEMOTIC NETWORK’

STAGE 5: CLOSURE

• MUSEUM AS HISTORICAL SITE
• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE
• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE

STAGE 6: REFLEXIVITY

• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE
• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE
• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE

STAGE 7: FEEDBACK & TESTING

• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE
• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE
• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE

STAGE 8: DOCUMENTATION

• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE
• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE
• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE

STAGE 9: EVALUATION

• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE
• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE
• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE

STAGE 10: DURATION

• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE
• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE
• MUSEUM AS A PLATFORM FOR HISTORICAL SITE
Figure 77 (top) Tally of reader responses for Ferguson Voices: Disrupting the Frame.

Figure 78 (centre) A woman holds up a hand-made sign at the Ferguson protests (image source Abu El-Maj, 2014).

Figure 79 (bottom) One of the first logo designs for Ferguson Voices.

Figure 80 (centre) Early design experiment with the Ferguson map.

Figure 81 (bottom) Early design experiment with the idea of "frame."
Figure 82 (top left) First iteration of final logo.

Figure 83 (top right) Map of the Ferguson boundary was treated with Photoshop brushes before adding to the underside of the logo.

Figure 84 (bottom left) Boundary vector graphic with brush-treated outline and blended text.

Figure 85 (bottom right) Detail of logo before the addition of the map, which is displayed at a large size within the exhibition.

Figure 86 (top) Logo for the exhibition, Ferguson Voices: Disrupting the Frame, designed by the author (Kahn & Pruce, 2017).

Figure 87 (bottom left) Name and map graphic for Darren Seals’ panel.

Figure 88 (bottom right) Name and map graphic for Valeri Felix’s panel.
One aspect of the *Ferguson Voices* exhibition that deserves a special mention is the ‘Tell us what you think’ panel. With the exception of *The Rescuers* ArtWalk, this was the first time a PROOF project used resources within the exhibition to invite comments from visitors, and it has opened the door for us to address an area that we need to develop more, and that’s visitor studies. While this type of research sits outside the scope of this research, the opportunity to open this up within PROOF’s projects has come about in a large degree because of the CHaSSMM Model’s impact upon other areas of the organisation. To date, all comments left on Post-It notes by visitors have been collected by the MCP team at the Human Rights Centre, and we have discussed further opportunities to study these. This will enable us to view the exhibition’s impact, in line with stage 3 of CHaSSMM’s 3x3 model (Figure 89).

6.6.5 Reflections and conclusion

Being the last of the four projects of this research, my aim was to bring together as many aspects of the CHaSSMM Model that the scope of this project would allow. Building upon the findings of the other three projects, the design brief created a central document for all of the exhibition team to work together, while feedback was eagerly sought during the design of *Ferguson Voices*, allowing for the multiple perspectives of the project’s collaborators to inform the design. This feedback changed the direction of the design significantly, and resulted in a more restrained approach to typographic representations. The Tacit Response method was further developed and expanded to all testimonies and key members of the project team. By tallying up these responses, the Tacit Response method informed and guided experimentation in the early stages of design, and revealed itself as a powerful tool for articulating the heart of a project.
6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the four projects through which the CHaSSMM Model of Analysis was developed, tested and refined. The projects, all of which can be classified as ‘difficult’, span a wide variety of topics, contexts, design materials and international locations, resulting in a diverse set of challenges. Some of those were organisational, while other limitations were created by geography or budgets. At times, the challenges presented problems outside of my control, and in other cases, were a catalyst for further development within my practice. In such cases, I was able to refer back to the CHaSSMM Model in practical ways to further develop methods for project management and interpretation. As a result, the methods outlined in this chapter contribute significant new knowledge to the field of practice-led design studies that investigate interpretive methods for difficult exhibitions.

The primary objective to creating the CHaSSMM Model was to encourage a reflexivity in practice, but understanding how this could be applied to the design of difficult exhibitions could not be achieved by consulting the literature in this field, within which the designer’s voice is still small. When I began designing difficult exhibitions with the first iteration of *The Rescuers* in 2009, I gave preference to what I perceived to be ‘norms’ within the exhibition genre. However, in the years since, and particularly over the course of these four projects, my focus has turned more decidedly to the issue of representation, and how my agency as a designer has an effect on this. However, I don’t work in isolation, but within a team of people, each with their own unique expertise. The designs that result must reach consensus, and that also requires a connection to organisational aims and ideology. The CHaSSMM Model, therefore, had to address both ideology and representation, while also being a practicable tool for design. By framing difficult exhibitions as multimodal semiotic resources that perform ideology, a model for research, understanding, reflexivity and interpretation was devised, developed and implemented. Further research is needed, however, as this model could also prove valuable as a tool for visitor studies, and needs to be further tested by comparing project aims and outcomes more directly. This research has already been discussed with the MCP team, and with a new project underway, it will be an interesting avenue to further develop the CHaSSMM Model of Analysis.
7.1 Summary

This research has examined the role of design in the creation of ‘difficult exhibitions’. These types of exhibitions have been singled out from the wider exhibition genre for two main reasons: firstly, they constitute a large proportion of my own design practice, which in turn has driven this inquiry. Secondly, these exhibitions are yet to receive close scrutiny from practice-led researchers within the Communication Design discipline, despite their growing presence within museums and other organisations. The importance of difficult exhibitions to the communities they represent, serve and educate cannot be underestimated. As the nature of exhibiting has shifted over the last 30-40 years towards representing a multiplicity of narrative voices, there has been a growing willingness from exhibiting organisations to engage in sharing the darker stories of history and contemporary society. As visitors come into contact with difficult content, they can also be presented with opportunities to engage with their own agency for change. This demands of difficult exhibition designers and teams both critical thought and a clear articulation of project intentions. Ideology, and how it is to be performed, must be made explicit.

This research has undertaken a range of approaches in order to better understand difficult exhibitions and improve methods of design practice in relation to them. This has produced several outcomes, which include (1) a review of multidisciplinary literature relevant to the contemporary context and culture of exhibiting, difficult knowledge, difficult exhibitions and the contributions of design within this context. (2) A case study examination of Inside: Life in Children’s Homes and Institutions (Arthur & Chynoweth, 2011) as a means of gaining insight into the work of design and curatorial professionals within this specific area of the exhibiting genre. (3) Most significantly, this research has centred on the initiation, development and testing of the CHaSSMM Model of Analysis. (4) Sections of this framework have been strategically implemented as a working model within the practice of designing four projects for PROOF: Media for Social Justice: Broken?, Unearthed: Stories of Courage in the Face of Sexual Violence, The Rescuers (ArtWalk) and Ferguson Voices: Disrupting the Frame. An iterative approach to theory building through practice has been undertaken over the course of these projects, with a focus on the stages of the CHaSSMM Model that can be most
the NMA outsource exhibition design, CHaSSMM is an argument for making these power relationships explicit through an articulation of the project’s very reason for being. Within my own design practice, it has been a proverbial lighthouse, fostering an ethical yet purposeful approach to difficult exhibitions.

The CHaSSMM Model, in combining critical hermeneutics with multimodal, social semiotics, creates a scaffolding for difficult exhibition design practice. It does this by mapping the critical hermeneutic theories of meaning, action and experience, and the social semiotic approach to the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary communicative acts, across the phases of design. From this theoretical position, the Reflexive Circuit has been designed to support design practice, from research and strategy to design execution and project review. Also born from this theory are methods to support interpretation, in particular, to assist in making explicit what may be tacit. As this research has demonstrated, the Tacit Response method has not only been an efficient and informative tool for measuring reader responses to testimony, but also to provide possible approaches for a project’s design.

7.3 Research findings

7.3.1 Research questions, aims and objectives

Before discussing the research findings, it is important to first revisit the questions, aims and objectives that have provided the foundation for this project. To reiterate, the research questions are:

1. What is the nature of difficult exhibition projects and their role within communities, culture and society?
2. What are the key aspects of the designer’s role within these projects?
3. How can difficult exhibitions be better understood as performances of ideological frameworks?
4. What can a multimodal, social semiotic perspective bring to difficult exhibition design?

As has been stated in Chapters 4 and 6 above, the aim of this research is to develop best practices in relation to the design of difficult exhibitions, while...
also addressing the notable lack of literature from the field of Communication Design in relation to this specific area of practice. The scope of this research has been determined by the nature of the projects, the organisational context in which the projects originated, and the research questions. This lead to a focus on the planning and design phases of difficult exhibitions, necessarily omitting a focus on eliciting visitor evaluations as a research limitation. By taking this route, the research focused on the development of methods of practice that could improve the exhibition outcomes before they are fabricated and put on display. The following objectives of this research were:

1. To develop a theoretical scaffolding for practice that provides a framework to support practice through an informed understanding of difficult knowledge, difficult exhibitions, the cultural aspects of their presence in the world, and empowering the agency of the designer.
2. To create a theoretical scaffolding that informs best practice methods that are responsive to real-world demands within the practice of designing difficult exhibitions.

7.3.2 Summary of findings

The findings of this research can be divided into three categories: (1) the literature; (2) the theoretical model; and (3) the implications of these for difficult exhibition design practice. Through a broad but nonetheless carefully curated examination of current literature in relation to difficult exhibiting, this research has identified a significant gap in regards to contributions made by and for designers. With this finding, I conclude that the role of designers in many stages of exhibition design is still undervalued by exhibiting professionals from other disciplines. This has been evidenced, for example, in the field of interpretation design, where designers are commonly brought into projects too late. In other cases, the methods of design, such as those of participatory design, are implemented with little or no involvement from designers. While the reasons for this may vary, it often comes down to project budget and/or a misguided perception of what designers ‘do, think and know’ (Kimbell, 2011, p. 298), which in turn can have a substantial impact on what designers can accomplish. A logical solution is for designers to increase their contribution to this field, not only to expand upon their own knowledge and practice, but to also help other disciplines to understand what design is capable of. In order to mitigate against the risk of design being relegated to the periphery of both the practice and research of difficult exhibiting, the practice-led design field needs to amplify its voice.

Conversely, the multidisciplinary approach to literature within this research has fostered a version of Kincehloes's (2001) ‘multiperspectivism’, adding insights from a wide range of disciplines that contribute to understanding difficult exhibitions as artifacts, as a form of cultural practice, and as educational and social resources. In this regard, this research has found that, if the practice of designing difficult exhibitions is to be better understood (and therefore improved), there needs to be an active engagement and exchange of knowledge between design and other contributing disciplines. This not only reflects the real-world nature of difficult exhibition projects, but also opens the path for interdisciplinary collaboration and further contributions from the design field.

The development of the CHaSSMM Model of Analysis is based on an interweaving of the literature with the building of theory and development of practice across the four projects of this research. This has resulted in the development of a range of tools that have had a profound impact upon my own design practice. Firstly, by framing difficult exhibitions as performances of ideology in the world, CHaSSMM acts as a warning against taking certain knowledge for granted: the why, what, where and when of the exhibition project requires explanation. The CHaSSMM Model links the nature of difficult exhibitions to design practice through a series of questions that help to convert tacit knowledge into an explicit form, by uncovering power relations within organisations and the community, and by encouraging a reflexive, critical distance to self within the designer. Understanding ideological performance as being constituted by a range of multimodal, semiotic resources provides a highly valuable analytical framework for design. This has been explored and tested through a variety of means, such as semiotic inventories within design briefs, and an understanding of how factors such as colour, typography and the gaze, for example, contribute to meaning both individually and combined. In this respect, critical hermeneutics, social semiotics and multimodality have combined to support the creation and development of the 3x3 Model and the Reflexive Circuit, which in turn have guided the planning and execution of
the four projects of this research. Significantly, these models have helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of difficult exhibitions as they exist in the world, their impact and their importance. These models have also provided the scaffolding for the creation of supporting documentation, such as design and project briefs, and the creation of a new interpretive method using binary identification. This has had an extraordinary impact upon my own design practice. It has encouraged reflexivity, been instrumental in the development of methods to support interpretation, and enabled me to better communicate with project teams. Last but not least, it has made me more acutely aware of my own agency within difficult exhibition projects, and the contribution and impact my work can have within communities.

7.4 Future research directions

One of the first areas of future research that stems from this study is to undertake visitor evaluations, particularly in relation to the Ferguson Voices exhibition. Colleagues at the Human Rights Centre at the University of Dayton have been collecting Post-It notes with visitor comments from the ‘Tell Us What You Think’ panel, and a joint research paper that examines the connection between projects aims and outcomes will be undertaken using the CHaSSMM Model as its guide.

The CHaSSMM Model of Analysis also shows potential application within a range of other design areas. To date, it has already been applied in the area of information design for paediatric health, an area in which power relationships traditionally follow a top-down formation, from doctor to nurse, to parent, to child (Wahlin & Paulovich, 2017). A further examination of the CHaSSMM Model within projects that require either objective or subjective interpretation within the information design context has been proposed.

7.5 The final word

We live in a world that, more than ever, requires its citizens to think critically about issues of social justice and human rights. This research has been as much about me as a citizen as it has been about me as a professional designer, research student and individual. It has called me back to the question of what I think, both tacitly and explicitly, where I hold biases, and in doing so, highlighted the importance of employing a critical distance to self. But it has been about so much more than ‘me’: it has been about the power of agency, the power of community, and, perhaps most of all, the power of visual communication to tell stories–even those we’d rather not know–and to engage people in the idea that they, too, can affect change. It has, most undoubtedly, changed me as a designer. The way I undertake projects, from research to production, has shifted substantially, and at its heart is the social responsibility that comes from understanding that representation matters. Through this, I have been able to impact the organisation that, without which, so much of this research may not have been possible. PROOF keeps striving to bring people together, to educate, and to improve the conditions in which we all live. To have been a part of this for the last decade has been a privilege. Most of all, every individual who has told their story through PROOF projects–their courage, passion and determination to fight for justice–has left an indelible mark. It is my sincere hope that this research will do the same.
8 Resources


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