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### Pop-Up Museums: An Exhibit Utilizing Pop-Up Practices

Mary Kwandras

*Buffalo State College*, langilm01@mail.buffalostate.edu

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## Abstract

Pop-ups are a new phenomenon emerging within the last decade. The purpose of this master's thesis is to explore this current trend, delving into their origins and their multiple uses. To compliment this research, a pop-up exhibition was developed using the skills learned within the museum studies master's program. The exhibition: *Howard D. Beach and the Museum Studies Master's Program* was on display from January 20<sup>th</sup> through February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at the Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum, in Buffalo, New York. Special thanks to the Graduate Student Association for support and funding for this project.

State University of New York  
College at Buffalo  
Department of History and Social Studies Education  
*Pop-Up Museums: An Exhibit Utilizing Pop-Up Practices*

A Thesis Project in  
Museum Studies

by

Mary Kwandras

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

May 2019

Approved by:

Noelle J. Wiedemer, M.A.

Lecturer in Museum Studies

Department of History and Social Studies Education

Thesis Adviser

Cynthia A. Conides, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of History and Social Studies Education

Director Museum Studies

Department of History and Social Studies Education

Second Reader

## **Acknowledgements**

Special thanks to Chris Kelley Director of the Karpales Manuscript Library on Porter Avenue, for allowing me to host my pop-up exhibit at the library. Special thanks to the Graduate Student Association for support and funding for this project. Special thanks to The Buffalo State Museum Studies Faculty and The Buffalo History Museum for allowing me to use their collection for my pop-up exhibit. Special thanks to the museum studies graduate students and alumni: Ashley Carney, Adam Barns, Kim Bruckman, Nellie Slocum, and Spencer Stulak for allowing me to use their projects in my pop-up exhibit. Special thanks to Noelle Wiedemer, Lecturer, Museum Studies Program and Dr. Cynthia Conides, Director of the museum studies program for guiding me through the creation of my pop-up exhibit.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The phenomenon of pop-ups represents a new frontier for museums, as they are creative and economical ways of producing exhibits for cultural enjoyment. Nina Simon, the Executive Director of the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History, author of *The Participatory Museum* and *The Art of Relevance* and creator of the museum blog *Museum 2.0* states the definition of pop-ups as:

1. A short-term institution existing in a temporary space.
2. A way to catalyze conversations among diverse people, mediated by their objects.<sup>1</sup>

Pop-ups are efficient, easily located, and economically convenient for museums to execute. As pop-ups have grown, they have begun to evolve into different forms to meet the needs of an individual or an institution. There are several forms of pop-ups that have emerged. Currently, the most popular pop-ups involve fully interactive and, “Instagram-worthy.” While pop-ups can draw large crowds, they are not what the format was originally intended for. The first pop-ups that were introduced to the museum community (by the Santa Cruz Museum of Art) followed a specific formula and were envisioned to involve the surrounding community and promote the museum.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nina Simon, “A Radical, Simple Formula for Pop-Up Museums,” *Museum 2.0* (blog), Wednesday, November 30, 2011, <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2011/11/radical-simple-formula-for-pop-up.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Michelle DelCarlo, the creator of the blog *The Pop Up Museum* claims and is credited with developing the original pop-up.<sup>3</sup> Her original concept for pop-ups consisted of a temporary exhibit created by the people who visit and choose to participate. The method generally works via a museum or individual first choosing a theme and venue, then inviting people to bring an object on a particular topic to share. Participants write labels for their objects and leave them on display for the duration of the exhibition. After the pop-up concludes, the objects are returned to the owners.<sup>4</sup> The original pop-ups usually lasted anywhere from a few hours to a week. It is common for these exhibitions to pop-up in unorthodox spaces, such as libraries or laundromats. The goal of all pop-ups is to bring a community together in conversation through stories, art, and objects. They can happen anytime, anywhere, and with anyone.<sup>5</sup>

In the time since their development, ephemeral exhibitions or museums have quickly morphed into what is commonly considered a pop-up. The most popular pop-ups take the form of artistic, large-scale, interactive exhibitions but other, smaller forms of pop-ups are used quite often within museum settings. There are many different forms of pop-up displays that museums can utilize. Most of these pop-up displays can be condensed into two categories: “the original pop up museum” and “the Instagram worthy pop-up display,” also known as the “Insta pop-up.” Both forms can be manipulated in a variety of ways to fit a museum professional’s specific needs. The terms pop-up museums and pop-up exhibit are used interchangeably in the museum field, but more often than not the term pop-up exhibit is used when describing a pop-up created

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<sup>3</sup> “About,” Pop Up Museum.org, accessed July 26, 2018, <http://popupmuseum.org/about/>.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Merritt, “Using Your Audience as Exhibit Designers,” *American Alliance of Museums*, last modified Apr 5, 2011, <https://www.aam-us.org/2011/04/05/using-your-audience-as-exhibit-designers/>.

<sup>5</sup> “About,” Pop Up Museum.org, accessed July 26, 2018, <http://popupmuseum.org/about/>.

by a museum or individual; while the term pop-up museum is used to describe pop-ups created by a group or organization (such as the Instagram pop-ups).<sup>6</sup> As this paper focuses on pop-ups as a whole, I refrain from using the terms pop-up museums and pop-up exhibits interchangeably and simply use the term “pop-up” to avoid confusion. However, my exhibit is labeled “pop-up exhibit” since it was created by me as a way to prove that any small museum or any individual can create a pop-up.

The definition of a pop-up is as fluid as the form itself. But there are some fundamental aspects that make a pop-up a pop-up. They are always temporary exhibits and always have visitor participation in some form. The pop-up gained a following after the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History (MAH) experimented with the format and advertised their findings on their websites, *Museum 2.0* and the *Pop Up Museum*.<sup>7</sup>

As museums began to experiment with pop-ups, they manipulated them in a way to best suit their needs. For instance, some museums cleverly utilize pop-ups to further develop and expand their institutions.<sup>8</sup> Pop-ups used in this way are created by an institution as a complimentary, semi-traveling exhibition, with the purpose of promoting their museum to the community. This is done by following the same formula as the original pop-up, but by tailoring it to fit a specific need (such as advertising a specific museum or artist.) This method enables

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<sup>6</sup> “About,” Pop Up Museum.org, accessed July 26, 2018, <http://popupmuseum.org/about/>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Merritt and Katie Spencer, “Pop-ups and Emerging Museums,” *American Alliance of Museums*, last modified February 28, 2013, <https://www.aam-us.org/2013/02/28/pop-ups-and-emerging-museums/>.



museums to physically expand their institutions into their communities, and by doing so, they bring their mission to the people.<sup>9</sup>

Museums have existed for centuries and are commonly seen by the public as temples of knowledge, but they have not always emanated a friendly appearance. Museums are beheld as too vast and overwhelming to thoroughly explore, or too classical and “stuffy” for the public’s preferred taste.<sup>10</sup> Modern interpretations of major museums describe them as distancing the public from the art by creating physical barriers between the public and the artwork, whether that is a glass cover, a rope, or the security guards hovering over a piece. The general public often finds these barriers unreceptive. This issue among other things has caused a decrease in museum attendance.<sup>11</sup>

By utilizing pop-ups, institutions or individuals are not only free to experiment with new forms of displaying their artifacts, but they can simultaneously reach a broader audience. Pop-ups give the public a refreshing view of museums. They create an approachable atmosphere and are conveniently located as they often travel to the visitor. This new form of display addresses common concerns of museums by increasing attendance and shifts the perception away from negative stereotypical views. Pop-ups are a fantastic tool for museums; their flexibility and affordability make them easy to implement. In some cases, their ephemeral nature can be problematic. This paper will explore the origins, uses and complications of pop-ups and will determine if they are ultimately a worthy venture for museums to pursue. To compliment this

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Kayla Lichtman, “Museums of the Moment,” *Study Breaks: Middlebury College*, April 1, 2018, <https://studybreaks.com/culture/pop-up-museums/>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

paper, I have created a companion pop-up, a project in which I modified the original formula of this medium for my own purpose. Through this project I will determine the ease of pop-ups and determine if they are a worthy venture for museum professionals to pursue.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction to Pop-Ups

Pop-ups are a new frontier for museums. This method of museum creation only emerged within the last 12 years. Because of this, research regarding this topic is often obscure, allusive, and found in unusual places. Most of the information on pop-ups is fluid and ever changing; this is because these events are sporadic, spontaneous and exist for short periods of time. Even though research on this topic can be difficult to ascertain, the topic of pop-ups is important to explore. Museums should be encouraged to use this method of exhibition-building, thus the investigation of these unique installations is necessary.

As stated, pop-ups can be incredibly useful for institutions, as they are low on cost and maintenance, easily accessible, and promote the institution in a unique format. Additionally, pop-ups are generally ephemeral, experiential, and flexible. By utilizing pop-ups, museum professionals can more efficiently reach their communities and publicize their museum through personalized exhibitions.

Little is known on the origin of the pop-up. They seem to have quite literally “popped up” out of thin air. To delve into the history and the expansion of these events, one must check all forms of temporary exhibit that may have led to their modern development. This ranges from the “Old Masters” exhibitions from the seventeenth century to pop-up stores, to the artistic movement of “Happenings” in the 1960’s and finally to the first documented pop-up in 2007. Theories regarding the origin of pop-ups were researched and included in this essay based on how influential they were towards the development of the concept.

To better understand the development of pop-ups, I researched multiple types of ephemeral displays, including art exhibitions from the seventeenth century, Happenings, pop-up retail stores, and flash mobs. Each model of temporary display was explored and investigated to ascertain if there were any similarities or signs of causation for development of pop-ups. Further investigation into the subject led to the discovery of multiple theories relating to the creation of pop-ups. For each of these temporary forms of display, research dedicated specifically to the particular subject was done. I conducted research regarding all forms of pop-ups. This information mostly consists of newspaper articles and museum websites, as most of these events are quite current. Interviews, personal pop-up visits, and talks with artists were also carried out, to expand the field of research. Additional information on more recent events can often be found on social media outlets; these sites were used to discover upcoming events (as most pop-ups are advertised through social media sites) but are not cited as sources. For the project portion of this thesis, I utilized museum pop-up-building kits (kits created by museum professionals as a guide on how to develop a pop-up.) Additional information on building the exhibit was found through pop-up examples.

### **Theories in Pop-Up Development**

Francis Haskell initiated the discussion on the origin of ephemeral museums within his text *The Ephemeral Museum Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition*.<sup>12</sup> Haskell's extensive research in his field led him to become one of the most original and influential art historians of the twentieth century. His work focused on "Old Masters Exhibitions" (further explained in chapter 3). Francis Haskell was a retired professor of the

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<sup>12</sup> Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum*, (London: Yale University Press, 2000).

History of Art at Oxford University. He passed away in 2000. His work is an important source on the origin of temporary museum exhibitions.

The correlation of “Old Masters” and pop-ups stems from a theory that was initially presented by Silvia Giordano. She shared this theory in a short essay entitled *Pop-Up Museums: challenging the notion of the museum as a permanent institution*.<sup>13</sup> Her accomplishments and knowledge, which can be found on her website, make her theory of pop-ups deriving from other forms of ephemeral displays credible.<sup>14</sup>

There seems to be a gap in time between the histories of ephemeral exhibits, from “Old Masters to Happenings. That does not mean that no form of ephemeral display occurred during this time, but that no evidence of these potential events was left behind for study. Although an argument can be made that Worlds Fairs which were occurring during this time could fill this gap. However their durations were longer than other ephemeral displays, thus excluding them from being a predecessor to the pop-up. Therefore, the next documented form of ephemeral or temporary displays is the “Happening” of late 1950s and early 1960s.

To explore this topic further, research on the events and the known creator of the art form, Allen Kaprow was investigated. The book entitled *Happenings* by Michael Kirby was the first piece of literature used to better understand the art process of Happenings. Michael Kirby is an instructor in the Speech Department at St. Francis College in Brooklyn, New York. He was formally a professional director with the Actors Playhouse, and is a friend of all the artists he

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<sup>13</sup> Silvia Giordano, “Pop-Up Museums: challenging the notion of the museum as a permanent institution,” *Predella journal of visual arts*, n°33, 2013, accessed July 25, 2018, [https://www.academia.edu/14850821/Pop-Up\\_Museums\\_challenging\\_the\\_notion\\_of\\_the\\_museum\\_as\\_a\\_permanent\\_institution](https://www.academia.edu/14850821/Pop-Up_Museums_challenging_the_notion_of_the_museum_as_a_permanent_institution).

<sup>14</sup> “Silvia Giordano Bio,” *SilviaGiordano.net*, accessed October 21, 2018, <https://silviagiordano.net/bio/>.

used in his book, including Kaprow. Kirby was known to assist some of the artists with their own productions of Happenings and is considered to be an expert on the subject.<sup>15</sup>

Michael Kirby focuses on the topic of Happenings as a whole. He researched the history of performance art and used personal encounters of Happenings as examples. He concentrated on artists that were popular in the industry, and the influential artists that caused the greatest effects on the advancement of the movement throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Kirby included the scripts from Happenings and then provided a detailed explanation of what occurred. The artists he focused on were Allen Kaprow, Jim Dine, Robert Whitman, Red Grooms, and Claes Oldenburg. Kirby provided multiple examples of each artist's Happenings with the exceptions of Red Grooms and Jim Dine, of which he only provided one each.<sup>16</sup>

The concept of the "ephemeral" was incredibly important to Happenings. The main point of the movement was to create a temporary experience, and as such could not be exhibited or preformed in a museum in the traditional sense. The only artifacts remaining from original Happenings are photographs and oral histories provided by viewers. Some of these histories have been recorded in works such as Michael Kirby's *Happenings*.<sup>17</sup> The purpose of Happenings was to confront and dismantle conventional views of the category of "art." These performances were so influential to the art world that they raised the specter of the "death" of painting.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Kirby, *Happenings*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1965).

<sup>18</sup> Tracy DiTolla, "Happenings Movement Overview and Analysis," *The Art Story Contributors*, July 26, 2018, <https://www.theartstory.org/movement-happenings.htm>.

To better understand the origin of Happenings, supplement research was used with the website *The Art Story*. *The Art Story* is an educational 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 2009. Their mission is to “demystify Modern Art and further art appreciation.”<sup>19</sup> Their goal is to share art with the world through a digital model. They aspire to create a world where the ideas and aspirations of art works are accessible to everyone. They currently have information regarding, 382 artists, 107 artistic movements, and 6 timelines of art. Their research on Happenings extends to their origin and includes a detailed biography of Allen Kaprow.<sup>20</sup>

Research on Allen Kaprow was necessary to better understand the art form. The book *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* written by Kaprow and edited by Jeff Kelley was particularly useful in trying to better understand the artist.<sup>21</sup> Jeff Kelley is known as an art critic, author, and curator. Kelley has been a practicing art critic since 1977. His book concerning Allen Kaprow was published by the University of California Press in 1993. The first-hand essays by Kaprow were an important source into the artist’s creative mind.

To follow up his previous work, Kelley wrote the biography, *Childsplay the Art of Allan Kaprow* The forward of the book is written by David Antin.<sup>22</sup> Antin is an internationally known poet and performance artist; and is an art and literary critic. He is a professor emeritus in the Visual Arts Department at the University of California. Additionally, he is a fan and personal

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*. ed. Jeff Kelley, (Los Angeles: University of California, 1996).

<sup>22</sup> Jeff Kelley, *Childsplay the art of Allen Kaprow*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press. 2004).

friend of Kaprow. His writing adds to the personal insight of the artist's life.<sup>23</sup> Having access to the author in this way provides the reader with a deeper understanding of Kaprow's creative process while he was developing Happenings.

To understand the concept of pop-ups, it is important to know where they came from, what came before them, and what influenced them. It is equally important to understand where this idea is successfully utilized. For example, before the pop-up became popular in the museum field, this model was often used in the business world. The book *Pop-up Retailing Managerial and Strategic Perspectives* written by Gary Warnaby and Charlotte Shi is a reliable resource relating to the subject of retail pop-ups.<sup>24</sup>

Gary Warnaby is Professor of Retailing and Marketing at the Institute of Place Management at Manchester Metropolitan University. His main research interests focus on the marketing of places and retailing.<sup>25</sup> Charlotte Shi is Lecturer in Fashion Marketing and Branding, at the School of Art and Design at Nottingham Trent University. Her research is focused on the interdisciplinary approach to marketing and retailing, and on the temporal dimensions of retailing. Both authors have contributed to their field through the development of various texts.<sup>26</sup>

Analogous to pop-ups, academic research into pop-up retailing is very limited. The academic research that does exist primarily focuses on the consumer assessments of pop-up

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., xi–xxi.

<sup>24</sup> Gary Warnaby and Charlotte Shi, *Pop-up Retailing: Managerial and Strategic Perspectives*, (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2018), <https://doi-org.proxy.buffalostate.edu/10.1007/978-3-319-71374-8>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



stores. Some research is centered on specific demographic characteristics of said target customers. Additional research has attempted to consider the ways in which the behavior of a consumer relates to a pop-up (further explained in chapter 3). This information is useful in understanding the concept of pop-ups.<sup>27</sup>

In 2003, a new trend arose in various North American and European cities: the flash mob. Paul Grainge describes flash mobs in the *International Journal of Cultural Studies* as “a group of [sic] People who make use of social media and mobile communication technologies to arrange a meeting at a specified location in order to perform some collective action.”<sup>28</sup> These idiosyncratic public happenings were regarded as a new expression of connectivity. The most common arrangement of flash mobs takes the form of spontaneous dance routines that often occur in random crowded places such as malls, busy shopping districts, or streets. The dances are generally filmed via hidden cameras and suddenly stop, whereafter the performers dissolve into the crowd. This form of entertainment is ephemeral in nature, seemingly spontaneous, and easily marketable.

The text *A Song and Dance: Branded Entertainment and Mobile Promotion* written by Paul Grainge, delves into the subject of flash mobs and their role in the new digital society. Paul Grainge is an Associate Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom. His research focuses on contemporary film, television, and media culture. He is a member of the Institute for Screen Industries Research (ISIR) at the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Grainge, “A song and dance: Branded entertainment and mobile promotion,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol 15, Issue 2, (August 18, 2011): 165–180, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877911416887>.

University of Nottingham and was appointed Director of the AHRC Midlands3Cities Doctoral Training Partnership in 2016. His extensive research into the field of media includes not only flash mobs, but also pop-up retail and the effects of flash mobs on the digital market.<sup>29</sup>

To better understand the nature of pop-ups, it is important to know how they were developed. The history of this form of museum exhibition is not yet solidified therefore, it is necessary for research to span a wide range of ephemeral presentations. Comprehension of the origins of these displays can help museums better understand pop-ups. Armed with this knowledge, museums can enhance their own institutions via use of pop-ups.

### **Application of Pop-Ups**

There are a variety of pop-ups that are utilized by institutions. Which form of pop-up to use is dependent on the need of the museum or individual that utilizes them. To better understand how these forms of ephemeral displays are used, I performed extensive research on the different methods. Most of this research was found through museum sites, museum blogs and sites dedicated to pop-ups. Additional information was found through personal visitations to pop-up events and through interviews with staff members of institutions where a pop-up was held.

The online platform and blog, *Museum 2.0*, and the website, *Pop up Museums*, are unique, reliable sources that track the current trends surrounding the topic. The author of *Museum 2.0*, Nina Simon, is the Executive Director of the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History (MAH). Her groundbreaking work on museum participation is described in two major publications focused on participation in museums and visitor experience. Nina Simon is

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

internationally-recognized as an expert on active community participation in cultural institutions and has been named a “museum visionary” by Smithsonian Magazine for her innovative approach to design. Additionally, Simon received the American Alliance for Museums’ Nancy Hanks Memorial Award in 2012 and was named one of the 50 most “powerful and influential people in nonprofit arts” by the Western States Arts Federation in 2012 and 2013. Simon has a background in science and holds a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering and mathematics from Worcester Polytechnic Institute.<sup>30</sup>

Although Simon is now known for her groundbreaking work in museums, when she became the Executive Director of the Santa Cruz MAH in 2011, the museum was in dire financial straits. Through her experimental methods, she was able to create a museum that is now focused on helping their community by “igniting shared experiences and unexpected connections.”<sup>31</sup> They accomplish this mission by bringing people together around art and history through dynamic exhibitions, events, partnerships, and programs. Simon has held pop-up events at her institution and has helped to popularize the ephemeral display format through her renowned blog, *Museum 2.0*. She also developed the website *The Pop Up Museum* as a way to share the museum’s past pop-ups and methods.<sup>32</sup>

Nina Simon’s blog *Museum 2.0* covers a wide range of museum topics and references a few pop-ups.<sup>33</sup> The website *The Pop Up Museum* purely focuses on pop-ups, making it a great

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<sup>30</sup> Nina Simon, “A Radical, Simple Formula for Pop-Up Museums,” *Museum 2.0* (blog), Wednesday, November 30, 2011, <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2011/11/radical-simple-formula-for-pop-up.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

source on the topic. The website explains what a pop-up is and how one can be created by including set-up instructions and offering examples of past pop-ups.<sup>34</sup> These websites are imperative resources to begin research on pop-ups. Their information is well sourced and reinforced with cases of ephemeral displays from their own institution and others.

Organizations such as the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), The International Council of Museums (ICOM), and the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are fantastic sources on museum related content. This applies to pop-ups as well. The AAM has been following the pop-up “trend” since 2012, while ICOM and UNESCO are just starting to talk about pop-ups, as they are gaining more attention and popularity.

The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) mission is to: “champion museums and nurture excellence in partnership with our members and allies.”<sup>35</sup> The Alliance has been a leader in developing best practices and advocating for museums since 1906 and provides a multitude of opportunities to museum staff and volunteers. More than 35,000 individual museum professionals and volunteers, institutions, and corporate partners benefit from the work of the Alliance. Since 2012, the AAM has dedicated space in their annual forecasting, known as *TrendsWatch*, for the topic of pop-ups.<sup>36</sup> The article, *Pop-ups and Emerging Museums* was one

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<sup>34</sup> “About,” Pop Up Museum.org, accessed July 26, 2018, <http://popupmuseum.org/about/>.

<sup>35</sup> “About AAM,” aam.org, accessed October 21, 2018, <https://www.aam-us.org/>.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

of the first articles ever written on the topic in an academic setting.<sup>37</sup> Since then, the organization has followed pop-ups, and shared museum case studies through their website and journals.

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) is an international organization of museums and museum professionals which is committed to “the research, conservation, continuation and communication to society of the world’s natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible.”<sup>38</sup> ICOM is a membership-based association and a non-governmental organization which establishes professional and ethical standards for museum activities. As a “forum of experts,” the organization makes recommendations on issues related to “cultural heritage,” promotes capacity building, and advances knowledge.<sup>39</sup> ICOM is the voice of museum professionals on the international stage and raises public cultural awareness through global networks and co-operation programs. ICOM has five main missions: “establish standards of excellence, lead a diplomatic forum, develop a professional network, lead a global think tank and carry out international missions.”<sup>40</sup> Prior to 2018, ICOM did not mention the subject of pop-ups. Based on their definition of a museum, pop-ups are not technically museums. ICOM’s definition of a museum is as follows:

A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches,

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<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Merritt and Katie Spencer, “Pop-ups and Emerging Museums,” *American Alliance of Museums*, last modified February 28, 2013, <https://www.aam-us.org/2013/02/28/pop-ups-and-emerging-museums/>.

<sup>38</sup> “Missions and objectives,” *icom.museum*, accessed October 22, 2018, <https://icom.museum/en/about-us/missions-and-objectives/>.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.<sup>41</sup>

Despite this definition, ICOM has acknowledged these ephemeral displays. In their September 2018 Annual Conference, ICOM dedicated presentation time to museum work that was outside of “the museum walls,” including talks on pop-up displays.<sup>42</sup>

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, Sciences and Culture. They believe that “political and economic arrangements of governments are not enough to secure the lasting and sincere support of the peoples. Peace must be founded upon dialogue and mutual understanding. Peace must be built upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity.”<sup>43</sup> To achieve this mission, UNESCO develops educational tools to help people live as global citizens free of hate and intolerance. UNESCO partners with ICOM to establish minimum standards for professional practices and achievements for museums and their employees. By working in tandem ICOM and UNESCO are able to reach a broader audience.

Some of the most helpful sources that were discovered related to a pop-up experience were news articles. Commonly, news articles provide general information on a pop-up such as time, date, and location, as well as what the museum is about. But a few articles, such as reviews of the pop-up itself provide more information, often featuring an artist that is involved with the project or a more in-depth look at the exhibit itself. Most of these articles are featured as online

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<sup>41</sup> ICOM, “Article 3 – Definition of Terms,” accessed July 25, 2018. <http://archives.icom.museum/definition.html>.

<sup>42</sup> “CECA,” *ICOM*, accessed October 31, 2018, <http://network.icom.museum/ceca/>.

<sup>43</sup> “UNESCO in brief,” [en.unesco.org](http://en.unesco.org), accessed October 22, 2018, <https://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-Unesco>.

sources through a local newspaper. Most of the pop-up events mentioned are “Insta-pop-ups.” Original pop-up events that are held by an institution are advertised in other ways, such as institution newsletters and social media. The information that is provided in online articles helps document these lucrative events. Without these articles, there would be little to no information on most pop-ups. Similar information can be found through social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram.

Not all newspaper articles are treated equally. Larger newspapers are more reliable sources for popular “Insta- pop-ups,” while smaller or local newspapers are reliable sources for local pop-ups. Newspapers such as *The New York Times*<sup>44</sup> and *The LA Times*<sup>45</sup> cover the most information regarding popular pop-ups. Most of the larger pop-up events or “Instagram pop-ups” occur in larger cities such as New York City, Los Angeles, and Toronto, so coverage by the larger newspaper companies is logical. Similarly, the *Wall Street Journal*<sup>46</sup> has covered pop-up events in New York City, but not in the same capacity as the previously listed papers. Local newspapers or smaller newspapers may cover a local museum’s pop-up. For instance, *The Buffalo News* has covered some pop-up events, within their *Gusto* section of their Sunday edition, at one point they dedicated a page to different temporary exhibits which occurred around Buffalo. Their article *Tiny Museums Offer Big Fun*, was featured in their May 2018 edition of the *Gusto*.<sup>47</sup> Not all

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<sup>44</sup> Amanda Hess, “The Existential Void of the Pop-Up ‘Experience’,” *The New York Times*, September 26, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/26/arts/color-factory-museum-of-ice-cream-rose-mansion>.

<sup>45</sup> Deborah Vankin, “Beyond the Streets’ art exhibition extends its L.A. run,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 2018, <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-beyond-the-streets-extends>.

<sup>46</sup> Lara Korte, “Pop-up ‘Museums’ Are Instagram Fans’ Favorite Place to Pose,” *The Wall Street Journal*, July 5, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/pop-up-museums-are-instagram-fans-favorite-new-place-to-pose>.

<sup>47</sup> Mary Cruz Goldman, “Micro-Museums Well Worth a Visit,” *Gusto* (Buffalo, NY), May 10, 2017, 16–18.

local papers will cover pop-up events. The prevalence of the news coverage appears to depend on the relevancy of the event to a particular town.

Because local museums cannot solely depend on their local news sources to advertise their events, they often refer to other means to accomplish their goals. As stated before, smaller institutions will often rely on their own newsletters and social media to communicate their pop-ups. They do this with the aim of informing their own members or anyone who follows them on social media. For instance, when The Buffalo History Museum, located in Buffalo NY, holds a pop-up, they will advertise this event in their tri-monthly newsletter and on their social media sites. To help promote the event, they often opt to pair their ephemeral events with larger or more prominent events. The museum in the past has displayed pop-ups with the Smithsonian's free museum day (usually held during the autumn months) and on their monthly free admission day, known locally as M&T Third Fridays. In the past the museum has created pop-ups based on the presidents and women's rights.<sup>48</sup> Museum newsletters are one of the best sources for a community member to learn about upcoming events, including pop-ups.

Museum newsletters are a marvelous way for museums to reach their community and museum members. But for guests outside of the museum community the best way to learn about any particular museum is through an institution's website. Museums that utilize their websites to the fullest often provide a plethora of information. This includes upcoming events, collections information, admission and parking information and in some cases past events. For instance, The Museum of Durham History in Durham, North Carolina uses their website to share their past

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<sup>48</sup> Amy Miller (Assistant Librarian), personal interview, September 22, 2018.



exhibitions.<sup>49</sup> The museum is small and to promote their institution they experimented with many forms of exhibiting, including pop-ups. They documented their process and shared this on their website for any online guest to view. Museum's that share information in this format are valuable sources for the museum community, because they share their past experiences and experiments. Other museum professionals can use that information to test within their own institutions.

Museums use a plethora of means to promote their exhibitions, including but not limited to their website, local news stations, social media, billboards, and advertisements in other areas. However, smaller museums usually will not go to such great lengths to promote a pop-up display within their institution. Some artists will utilize these forms for their "Insta pop-ups," but this is generally for a pop-up that will last a week or more and is in a larger city such as New York City or Los Angeles. Along with personal newsletters and social media sites, smaller institutions rely on word of mouth to spread the news of their pop-up. This was the method by which I learned of many exhibits of which I personally visited. This method is not always reliable, but is a way to quickly spread information. Without word of mouth, I probably would not have visited as many pop-ups as I did.

A pop-up within a museum setting is run by museum employees. Interviewing these employees gave valuable insight into the individual process of developing said pop-up. For instance, when I visited a pop-up, the employees that were interviewed were generally a part of the collections team. Other employees that were interviewed were a part of the archives, research

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<sup>49</sup> "About Our History," Museum of Durham History, accessed July 26, 2018, <https://www.museumofdurhamhistory.org/about/our-history/>.

libraries, and visitor experience teams. For example, the pop-up that was held at The Buffalo History Museum was created by the museum's Research Library, so the person whom I interviewed was an employee of that library. Similarly, when I was at The Corning Museum of Glass, I spoke with a gaffer about their Glass Barge.<sup>50</sup> Interviews of the employees running a pop-up are a valuable resource for information on the subject. These interviews give personal insight into an institution's development method; from the initial idea to planning and development, and from advertising to implementation.

For larger, more popular pop-ups or "Instagram pop-ups," walk-in interviews are usually not an option. This is because the personnel that are running the exhibit are usually part time employees that were hired to work an admissions desk. This is not to say that these employees do not have valuable information to share about an exhibit, but because these museums were created on a slightly larger scale, the part time staff were most likely not included in the planning process. To get information on the development of these displays would require an interview with a team member that was a part of said planning process, or in rare cases, the artist responsible for the exhibit. However, even if an attempt to schedule an interview is made, an interview may not be possible. This was an issue I personally ran into. Many of the larger pop-ups were in cities that, at the time I could not travel too and employees running these events could not be reached.

Personal visits to a pop-up are imperative to research the subject. Viewing a pop-up can give insight into the different methods individuals use to develop their displays. Even if an

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<sup>50</sup> "Glassbarge," Corning Museum of Glass, accessed July 25, 2018, <https://www.cmog.org/glassmaking/demos/hot-glass-demos/glassbarge>.

interview is not possible, witnessing an exhibit can be informative and enjoyable. As each pop-up is unique, visiting them can give a museum professional an opportunity to learn about different exhibitory methods. As the subject of this paper is pop-ups, visiting different types of exhibits is a direct source on the topic.

Interviews of museum employees and research on the subject of pop-ups were conducted through personal visits to pop-ups. Further information on the topic was gathered through discussions with local artists at events. For example, when visiting the pop-up *Play/Ground* in Medina, NY, I spoke with multiple independent artists about their installations and other pop-up events. Many of the artists at the event had experience in more than one pop-up installation. They shared information regarding their personal experiences and shared insider information on other pop-up events. Multiple artists shared information on larger pop-up events that were going to happen in New York City. The main event that was spoken of was *Spring/Break*.<sup>51</sup> This event is an art show and is an internationally recognized exhibition platform. It will use underused, atypical, and historic New York City exhibition spaces to activate and challenge the traditional cultural landscape of the art market.<sup>52</sup> The most recent was the eighth annual exhibition and was held from March 5th through March 11th, 2019. Since so many of the artists spoke of the importance of the show, I thought it was best to include it in this paper, although it is not technically a pop-up, since it is a large gathering of artists and some installations are permanent.<sup>53</sup> Information on pop-ups can be difficult to find, but not impossible. Although the

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<sup>51</sup> “About,” Spring/BreakArtShow.com, accessed October 21, 2018, <http://www.springbreakartshow.com/about/>.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

sources used for this paper are mostly non-traditional, the information found is still valuable for research on this topic.

## **Pop-Up Exhibit**

For my thesis project I opted to create my own pop-up. I referenced a guide that was created by the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History. This guide, entitled *How to Make a Pop Up Museum—An Organizer’s Guide*, was developed by Nora Grant and edited by Nina Simon.<sup>54</sup>

Nora Grant is an artist living in Oakland, CA. In 2011, she received her BA in English from the University of California, Berkeley, with an independent study in printmaking. She has worked in various art and educational settings, including curating exhibitions and managing public programs for Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History, managing public engagement and communications for Intersection for the Arts in San Francisco, tutoring inmates at San Quentin State Prison, and assisting contemporary artists at New York fine art paper mill Pace Prints.<sup>55</sup>

The guide refers to itself as a “Pop Up Museum Organizer’s Kit.”<sup>56</sup> This kit offers steps needed to create a pop-up. It follows the development of a pop-up from the idea stage through the application and after. The guide also includes a section on how to advertise your pop-up event. At the end of the kit there is a list of pop-up supplies that can help to design a pop-up.

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<sup>54</sup> Nora Grant, *How to Make a Pop Up Museum—An Organizer’s Guide*, ed. Nina Simon, (Santa Cruz: Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History, 2013).

<sup>55</sup> “About,” Pop Up Museum.org, accessed July 26, 2018, <http://popupmuseum.org/about/>.

<sup>56</sup> Nora Grant, *How to Make a Pop Up Museum—An Organizer’s Guide*, ed. Nina Simon, (Santa Cruz: Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History, 2013), 5.

They also offer a disclosure that states “...the Pop Up Museum is not a one-size-fits-all event. Have fun discovering what makes YOUR museum pop.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

### Chapter 3: Theories Surrounding the Antecedents of the Pop-Up Phenomenon

There are many theories surrounding the emergence of the pop-up trend. Some believe that the idea of pop-ups has been around for centuries. Others believe that pop-ups are derived from art trends that emerged within the last few centuries and evolved from there. Each theory analyzes the trend of pop-ups and explores their origins to better understand where they came from.

It seems that pop-ups have in a sense literally “popped-up” out of thin air. The popularity of this trend has grown exponentially over the last few years. Pop-ups have “officially” been around for over 12 years, the first documented one popping-up in 2007 in New York City.<sup>58</sup> Different types of pop-ups have emerged throughout the last few decades based on the need of the developer. For instance, the pop-up in 2007 occurred due to an artist’s spatial needs. The reasoning behind this theory is that the pop-up came about because artists had a difficult time finding space to display their exhibitions. It was also a way for an artist to show work in a setting that was not controlled by a museum.<sup>59</sup> The concept of creating small, artistic installations is not original to the pop-up, however; artists in the late 1950s and early 1960s were utilizing small and unusual spaces to display their work long before the term of “pop-up” term was used.<sup>60</sup>

What makes pop-ups appealing is their ephemeral nature. The characteristics of art exhibitions and pop-ups induce a special excitement in people. This is because temporary exhibits epitomize the conviction that it may not be possible to see something of this nature

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<sup>58</sup> Cros, Hilary Du and Lee Jolliffe, *The Arts and Events*, (London: Routledge, 2014,) 43–45.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Michael Kirby, *Happenings*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1965), 9–16.

again. These exhibits offer something seemingly far away, often from an impenetrable private collection. They offer a rare and unique socialization opportunity. The temporary aspect of these museums and exhibits causes people to believe that it is their last and only chance to see what may be on display, so they go.<sup>61</sup>

World's Fairs and larger "blockbuster" exhibitions can stand as proof of this concept. For instance, when the Mona Lisa was displayed in the United States in 1963 at the National Gallery in Washington, and later the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, over seven hundred thousand visitors came to witness the exhibition. This was the first and only time the Mona Lisa was on view in the United States, making it a rare and valuable opportunity for the public to view Leonardo da Vinci's most famous painting.<sup>62</sup>

World's Fairs have been exciting the public for centuries and special exceptions are often made for these Fairs. To ensure a significant turnout, fair committees would often seek out attractions that spark and awe any crowd. This was the case at the Philadelphia International Exposition of 1876, where the Statue of Liberty's torch-wielding arm was exhibited. The statue was one of the biggest attractions at the Fair, attracting nearly ten million visitors.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, at the 1964 New York World's Fair, Michelangelo's Pietà was put on display. This is the only time

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<sup>61</sup> Mark P. Mattson, "Superior pattern processing is the essence of the evolved human brain," *The National Center for Biotechnology Information*, *Front Neurosci*, 2014; 8: 265, published online 2014 Aug 22, doi: 10.3389/fnins.2014.00265. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4141622/citedby/>.

<sup>62</sup> Silvia Giordano, "Pop-Up Museums: challenging the notion of the museum as a permanent institution," *Predella journal of visual arts*, n°33, 2013, accessed July 25, 2018, [https://www.academia.edu/14850821/Pop-Up\\_Museums\\_challenging\\_the\\_notion\\_of\\_the\\_museum\\_as\\_a\\_permanent\\_institution](https://www.academia.edu/14850821/Pop-Up_Museums_challenging_the_notion_of_the_museum_as_a_permanent_institution).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

in history that the Pietà had ever left San Pietro.<sup>64</sup> Since these Fairs were short-lived, they initiated a desire to attend and witness something that will never again be viewed in that manner.

The concept of an exhibit or event being inherently ephemeral makes them unique, but how does it apply to the origin of the pop-up? There are a few theories relating to the origin of pop-up events including but not limited to: “Old Masters,” Happenings, retail pop-up events, and flash mobs. Since all of these events are innately ephemeral, their nature may have led to the development of modern-day pop-ups.

### **Old Masters**

To better understand the correlation between the ephemeral exhibitions of “Old Masters” and pop-ups, the term “Old Masters” must be further explored and defined. The rise of ephemeral exhibitions can be traced back to Italy during the seventeenth century. These exhibitions, known predominantly as “Old Master Retrospectives,” later led to the development of international “blockbuster” exhibitions. Bureaucratic salons propagated “Old Master” exhibitions, in France. They became influential at the beginning of the eighteenth century and continued into the late nineteenth century. Nationally based “Old Master” exhibitions continued to be developed through a variety of world events including the rise of Napoleon and the World War II. Modern museums around the world often rely on “blockbuster” exhibitions, some of which continue the tradition of featuring the “Old Masters.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 8-11.



The term “Old Masters” generally refers to any artist (generally painters) of great skill known to have worked in Europe before 1800. This term may also reference any work of art created by said artist. A work that was created by a pupil of an “Old Master” may also fall under this term. To be considered an “Old Master,” artists needed to be fully trained and considered a master of their local artists’ guild. The date of an artwork is usually employed to verify whether a piece or an artist is considered an “Old Master,” not the quality of the work itself. “Old Masters” exhibitions were a compilation of artists’ works that were shown in one location, such as homes of wealthy men, for a short period of time. Often these works were acquired via reluctant loans from other institutions, or even by illegal means, causing some political backlash between European countries. A common trend in the early development of “Old Masters” was inaccurate documentation (as these exhibits pre-date modern museum methods of documentation.) Often images were hung too close together, with little consideration for chronology or artistic school. The most popular and most often “Old Masters” exhibitions often featured works created by Rembrandt.<sup>66</sup>

The first documented ephemeral form of exhibitory can be found in the “Old Masters exhibits” (occasionally referred to as “great masters exhibits”) of the seventeenth century. The phrase “Old Masters Exhibit” derives from the “pavilion concept.” The word pavilion derives from the Latin “papilo” which means tent or, more literally, butterfly. This indicates the flexible nature of these events in terms of space, time, and function.<sup>67</sup> This nature is one of the main qualifications for pop-ups. The “pavilion concept” originated in military use during the time of

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum*, (London: Yale University Press, 2000), 2–7.

the Roman Empire but was later incorporated into the arts during the seventeenth century,<sup>68</sup> and later methods of ephemeral display, such as pop-ups.

The term "Old Masters" generally refers to the most recognized European artists working between the Renaissance and the 1800s. This term is an informal designation and is not considered a specific art historical style or movement. "Old Masters" may include artists who fall within any of the following categories: Gothic Art, the Early, High, and Northern Renaissance, Mannerism, Baroque, the Dutch "Golden Age," Rococo, Neoclassicism, and Romanticism. Accordingly, "Old Masters" refers to a range of the most seminal figures in Western art history, from Leonardo da Vinci to Michelangelo, Albrecht Dürer to Caravaggio, Rembrandt, and Jacques-Louis David.<sup>69</sup>

The Academy of Design in Florence organized "Old Master" exhibitions from the 1670s to the 1790s. Curators of these exhibitions were conscious of creating shows for the wealthy public of the time. They included guides and detailed (however not always accurate) catalogues of the artworks. But the first "real"<sup>70</sup> exhibition of "Old Masters" took place in 1815 in the halls of the British Institution in Pall Mall with an exposition dedicated to Joshua Reynolds.<sup>71</sup> Celebrating "Old Masters" later gave rise to a debate by some curators that the negative connotations that celebrating the great artists of the past might have on contemporary artists. With the rise of temporary art exhibitions, three crucial aims were consolidated. The first point

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 8–11.

<sup>70</sup> "Real" refers to first exhibition that was on view to the public.

<sup>71</sup> Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum*, (London: Yale University Press, 2000), 30–35.

focused on the construction of great national museums, the second focused on the importance of the public benefit of art, and third was the entertainment factor of these of exhibitions. The debate later gave rise to national museums, which hosted exhibitions for the public to see. This debate ended the trend of displaying “Old Masters” in private settings and now these paintings can be seen on display at modern museums.<sup>72</sup>

“Old Masters” exhibitions were the first recorded form of ephemeral display relating to the museum field, making them a possible and credible ancestor to the pop-up. The phenomena of “Old Masters” initiated the liberation of art work from private showings to the public. Although “Old Masters” exhibits lasted a longer period of time than modern pop-ups, they offered and still offer the excitement of witnessing a rare phenomenon.

## **Happenings**

Modern pop-ups offer unique temporary experiences in unusual places, such as laundromats, libraries, and shopping malls. But pop-ups were not the first to host their displays in atypical venues. The method originated in the artistic movement, Happenings. As stated before, Happenings were developed in the 1950s and 1960s as a way to challenge the standard art form of the era.<sup>73</sup> Happenings occurred in unusual places such as warehouses, parking lots, and in one instance, a farm. The events were short. Each original “performance” could last anywhere from ten minutes to a few hours.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 144–164.

<sup>73</sup> Michael Kirby, *Happenings*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1965), 9–11.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 10–14.

The main concept of a Happening involved a viewer experiencing the art as it “happens.” Often times this involved the participation of the viewer. There was no definite or consistent style for the art movement; they greatly varied in size and intricacy. Artists that staged a Happening believed and operated with the fundamental belief that art could be brought into the territory of everyday life, meaning their art from could happen anywhere at any time, or that they were not limited to an art museum or gallery. These performances were the opposite of other traditional works of art which were thought of as static. Happenings evolved and provided a unique encounter for each individual who partook in the experience. This change was a reaction against the long-standing dominance of the technical aesthetics of Abstract Expressionism and was a new art form that grew out of the social changes occurring in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>75</sup>

Happenings were inspired by the movements and performances of the “Futurists” and “Dadaists,” which occurred during the 1910s and 1920s. Futurists would enact short avant-garde plays and read manifestoes and poetry on a stage. Those who performed these plays would often break the “forth wall” and prompt audience participation. This idea was transformed in Happenings as the absence of boundaries between the viewer and the artwork. This meant the artwork became defined by the action as opposed to the physical or resulting object.<sup>76</sup>

Similar to the Futurists, the Dadaists challenged the expectations of what “art” should be, or what it was supposed to look like. This idea directly influenced the creation of Happenings through well-known Dadaist John Cage. John Cage’s ideas and teachings, during the late 1950s

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<sup>75</sup> Michael Kirby, *Happenings*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1965).

<sup>76</sup> Tracy DiTolla, "Happenings Movement Overview and Analysis," *The Art Story Contributors*, July 26, 2018, <https://www.theartstory.org/movement-happenings.htm>.

as an instructor at Black Mountain College impacted the views of Happenings artists. Additional instructors Josef and Anni Albers, Merce Cunningham, Robert Motherwell, and Buckminster Fuller influenced the movement as well.<sup>77</sup> As a student of John Cage, Allen Kaprow<sup>78</sup> developed a belief that learning should be a continual process, with no distinction between making or learning about art and routine aspects of day-to-day life. This emphasis on the perpetual state of learning and creating and an appreciation for the prosaic, directly influenced Kaprow.<sup>79</sup>

Happenings fully evolved from Allen Kaprow's "environments," which were installation pieces that involved large sculptural collages. He developed this concept after taking John Cage's classes and reworking his methodologies. Kaprow's introduction of the element of sound into his work led to the first Happening. The term itself was coined by the artist while describing a performance that had taken place on George Segal's farm in 1957.<sup>80</sup>

Happenings and pop-ups share similar aspects, such as their novel and ephemeral nature. It is because of this that we can consider Happenings a close ancestor of the pop-up. Although current pop-ups normally do not consist of performance art the same way that Happenings did, their unique form of exhibitory and tendency to be located in unusual places mark pop-ups in a similar category of the art movement Happenings.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> The creator of Happenings.

<sup>79</sup> Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley, (Los Angeles: University of California, 1996), xiv–xv.

<sup>80</sup> Jeff Kelley, *Childsplay the art of Allen Kaprow*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press. 2004), 8–11.

## Pop-Up Retailing

Pop-up stores or pop-up retailing, a now popular trend, emerged in the 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>81</sup> This form of retail also known by terms such as flash, temporary, and guerrilla retailing, was originally used to create a setting in which a store or business could facilitate a direct, experientially-oriented customer-brand interaction for a limited period. Pop-up retailing has become a more commonplace trend and is applied to a variety of commercial activities including shops, bars, restaurants, and cinemas. This trend has expanded; pop-up stores are now often used to launch new brands or materials in the retail world. The pop-up store has become a common retail strategy utilized by businesses and are frequently used as a way to promote start-ups or to test an initial brand concept. They can also be used in both traditional and online platforms to supplement their more mainstream business activities.<sup>82</sup> The concept for these stores is essentially the same as pop-ups; they are ephemeral in nature and experimental.

Pop-up retailing emerged in the United States as a marketing tactic based on the theory that an individual will be more inclined to purchase an item if it is only available for a short period of time. The same theory can be applied to sales marketing; people are more inclined to purchase an item if it is only available at that price for a limited time.<sup>83</sup> This inherent drive to witness an event or purchase an item based on its' limited availability is utilized in all ephemeral forms of display, including pop-ups. Pop-up stores deliberately market items in this format to attract a mass of consumers in a limited time period.

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<sup>81</sup> Gary Warnaby and Charlotte Shi, *Pop-up Retailing: Managerial and Strategic Perspectives*, (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2018), <https://doi-org.proxy.buffalostate.edu/10.1007/978-3-319-71374-8>.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

Pop-up museums are generally created by not-for-profit organizations, and because of this, they do not share the same drive as pop-up stores. This is the main difference in the two mediums. Although they share a name, they have different underlying purposes. Pop-up stores are intended to bring in sales, whereas pop-up museums are intended to bring culture and knowledge to a community. Pop-up museums attract new members to museums, and can generate revenue. The pop-up store was developed during the last few decades, and its inherent similarities lead to the assumption that it is the closest and still thriving relative of the pop-up museum.

### **Flash Mobs**

In the beginning of 2003, in various North American and European cities, the phenomenon of flash mobs emerged. A flash mob, as stated before, is “a group of people who make use of social media and mobile communication technologies to arrange a meeting at a specified location in order to perform some collective action.”<sup>84</sup> Flash mobs are similar to Happenings. The flash mobs can take any form of spontaneous action but most commonly consist of dance routines. They occur in unexpected crowded places such as malls, busy shopping districts, or streets. One of the most famous flash mobs occurred in January of 2009, at the crowd Liverpool Street Station. This flash mob consisted of a group of 400 tourists and staff members that suddenly broke into song and dance showing off their hip-hop, disco and ballroom moves. The flash performance was so spontaneous and fun that T-Mobile decided to use it for an

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<sup>84</sup> Daniel Chandler and Rod Munday, "Flash Mob," in *A Dictionary of Media and Communication*, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.buffalostate.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780191800986.001.0001/acref-9780191800986-e-1004>.

advertising campaign.<sup>85</sup> Unlike Happenings, there is no public invitation to the performance. The events are filmed via hidden cameras and suddenly stop, after which the performers dissolve into the crowd. This form of entertainment is ephemeral in nature, seemingly spontaneous, and easily marketable.<sup>86</sup> Flash mobs have many similarities to the artistic movement of Happenings. Their spontaneity, unique location, and short duration group them into the same category as other ephemeral displays.

### **Similarities and Differences**

The concept of pop-up museums is inherently the same as pop-up stores and share similar qualities with Happenings, flash mobs, and “Old Masters” exhibitions, as they are all ephemeral, novel displays that entice the public due to their temporary nature. These similarities, however, do not necessarily prove that pop-ups derive from the others but may give some insight into how pop-ups formed. It seems that people have been creating temporary displays for quite some time, thus proving that temporary displays are appealing to the public and can draw quite a large crowd. Although pop-ups share similarities with the ephemeral displays listed above, they are still unique in their own right. Pop-ups create an added emphasis on community that other forms of ephemeral display do not. Their flexible nature creates a distinctive divide from their potential predecessors. They offer a unique display method to not only museum professionals, but also artists, students, and any individual who wishes to invest their time in developing one.

Ephemeral displays have evolved due to the need of the times, each one making an impact on the world in their own way.

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<sup>85</sup> “Ten Most Famous Flash Mobs,” DelnextBLOG. Accessed October 22, 2018.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.



## **Chapter 4: Pop-Ups in Action**

Pop-ups are versatile methods of display that museums can utilize in a number of different ways. Each pop-up is unique because they are created for and by different museums and/or individuals for a plethora of reasons. Examples of pop-ups range from small institutional exhibits (such as the ones created by The Buffalo History Museum) to large artistic installations (such as Color Factory and Candytopia.) Each pop-up is unique because they only happen once and for a short period of time, thus each pop-up brings a unique showcasing quality that can amplify a museum's or individual's reputation through non-traditional means of display. Since the increase of pop-up popularity over the last few years, many examples of pop-ups have emerged. Examining these pop-ups gives better insight into the medium and will help to determine their worth for the museum community.

### **Small Institutional Pop-Ups**

Smaller museums tend to follow DelCarlo's "traditional" method of pop-ups. Such was the case with the Museum of Durham History. The Museum of Durham History, located in Durham, North Carolina, utilized pop-up events as a form of "rapid proto-typing" and as a low-cost, low-risk way of trying out concepts to further develop their museum. Through the use of a pop-up, the director was able to build a stronger relationship with the community. The director of the museum, Katie Spencer, felt the need to experiment with new ways of community outreach after witnessing other history museums in the area struggle with the same issue. The museum

had the advantage of experimenting during a time when museums were re-evaluating their institutional histories and exploring new ways to reach their communities.<sup>87</sup>

The main form of experimentation for the museum and the most successful was the utilization of pop-ups. Spencer was inspired when she learned about the unique form of pop-ups through viewing Michelle DelCarlo's concept. Michelle DelCarlo, the creator of the blog post *The Pop-Up Museum*, is dedicated to "creating conversations, connecting people to one another and ideas, and providing access to experiences of value."<sup>88</sup> After discovering pop-ups are a low-tech, low-cost way to create engagement and conversation, Spencer set off to develop one.

When the Museum of Durham History started, it was located in a small building that was being leased, and was later given the nickname "History Hub."<sup>89</sup> Spencer was hopeful that by using a pop-up she could kick-start conversations about the past in her community. The pop-up provided the museum and the community a way to bring people, objects, and stories to the "History Hub." In this way, Spencer was able to create the experience of a museum for people without a formal exhibitory space. Additionally, since the museum did not have a central historical collection, the pop-up model created an opportunity for the staff to discover documents and objects that were valuable to the museum's mission and the community's understanding of the past.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Elizabeth Merritt and Katie Spencer, "Pop-ups and Emerging Museums," *American Alliance of Museums*, last modified February 28, 2013, <https://www.aam-us.org/2013/02/28/pop-ups-and-emerging-museums/>.

<sup>88</sup> "About," Pop Up Museum.org, accessed July 26, 2018, <http://popupmuseum.org/about/>.

<sup>89</sup> "About Our History," Museum of Durham History, accessed July 26, 2018, <https://www.museumofdurhamhistory.org/about/our-history/>.

<sup>90</sup> Elizabeth Merritt and Katie Spencer, "Pop-ups and Emerging Museums," *American Alliance of Museums*, last modified February 28, 2013, <https://www.aam-us.org/2013/02/28/pop-ups-and-emerging-museums/>.

The first pop-up event that the museum held took place at the “History Hub” as a part of a weekend-long outdoor festival in downtown Durham. Spencer selected the theme and format of the pop-up through conversations with the staff, volunteers, and community members. The staff wanted to focus on a more universal theme such as hope, but they learned that type of theme was difficult for guests to relate to and would be hard to obtain tangible objects for. Tangible topics, or object-based topics, were more relatable to the public.<sup>91</sup> The museum focused their first pop-up around the theme: *Tools of the Trade*. The staff encouraged people to interpret “tools” to be anything used to get a job done. Objects such as factory tools and cooking items were included in the pop-up. Their first pop-up resulted in twelve people bringing personal items such as family objects to share. Over two hundred people visited the pop-up; furthermore, a photographer and audio documentarian attended the pop-up. Their visit helped to spread the stories that were captured during the short event.<sup>92</sup>

To ensure the success of their first pop-up event, the staff at the Museum of Durham History worked diligently to guarantee people would come. The staff made phone calls inviting people to bring pieces from their own collections or from their family’s history. Many of the guests that brought objects to the pop-up were ones that were personally invited to do so. There was only one person who brought an item without being asked to do so. As is with most models of pop-ups, advertising is incredibly important to the success of the event. This was a lesson the staff at the museum quickly learned. If the staff at the Museum of Durham History did not personally invite guests to bring objects to their pop-up, only one personal item would be on

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

display and the staff would not have learned more about their community.<sup>93</sup> Without advertising their pop-up event could have ended in a dismal failure, discouraging them from utilizing the medium again.

As the museum experimented with pop-ups, they developed new events that worked best for their needs. They partnered with other community groups, and in one case, with the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, to create different pop-ups. The collaboration with Durham's insurance company focused on the company's celebration of their 115<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The museum and the company worked together to invite current and past employees to bring photos, stories, and objects from the time they spent with the company. This created a specific pop-up based on the history of one company curated by the employees. The Durham museum also collaborated with the Durham County Library to develop a specific pop-up based on Durham's Jewish History. They worked with the students at Duke University and North Carolina Central University to create mini-exhibits based on the history of the college. All of the collaborations between the organizations and the staff that the museum conducted linked the museum to the members of Durham's community and gave an interesting perspective on the history of the town. This information contributed to broader guest participation with the museum. The museum hoped to convince the people of Durham that their past is interesting and significant enough to be in a museum.<sup>94</sup>

Using pop-ups is a wonderful way to increase community participation. But it can be a challenge for individuals who do not spend time thinking about the overall goal of the pop-up model, nor see a museum as a place that is central to their everyday lives. Pop-ups can be used as

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

a tool and a step in the right direction for museums. They can be utilized to convince their community that the museum they aspire to develop is essential to the needs of said community. In the case of the Museum of Durham History, pop-ups have proved to be a simple way for an institution to communicate the importance of their vision to their community.

The success of Museum of Durham History's pop-up was a unique and creative spin on the use of the pop-up model. The pop-ups that the museum created were incredibly successful for the institution, as they led to the expansion of their museum, both physically and theoretically.<sup>95</sup> Their success is a great example for other developing museums that wish to reach their own communities. The museum worked diligently to ensure that they had many successful pop-up events using this format. They discovered the importance of advertising and experimented with different topics to reach a broader audience. Pop-ups can be used in many ways and, based on the success of the Museum of Durham History in North Carolina, this format is proven to be a useful tool for developing intuitions.

Since their experimentation with pop-ups, the Museum of Durham History has begun to thrive within their town. Located in a revitalized downtown bus station, they are devoted to providing their community with information regarding the history of their community. The museum's mission as stated by their website reads as follows:

The Museum of Durham History is a 21st-century museum that uses stories about people, places and things to foster curiosity, encourage further inquiry, and promote an understanding of diverse perspectives about the Durham community and its history. The museum is putting its mission into action through a personal approach to history that sets this museum apart: an innovative, community model

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<sup>95</sup> "About Our History," Museum of Durham History, accessed July 26, 2018, <https://www.museumofdurhamhistory.org/about/our-history/>.

that engages with history through stories—the personal memories, experiences and family lore of our shared heritage.<sup>96</sup>

The museum has moved forward from pop-ups and has since developed a new marketing strategy. They have commissioned a set of banners celebrating the arts in Durham, developed brochures, launched a website, and created social media outlets including a museum blog. Additionally, the museum has initiated walking tours and educational programming that are now run by the director and part time consultants. To meet the needs of the rising organization, the museum developed a lucrative membership program and expanded their board of Trustees.<sup>97</sup> The Museum's current success derives from their hard work and experimentation with pop-ups.

Pop-ups are tools that can be used by any institution or individual but are predominantly more popular with smaller museums. This is because pop-ups give these institutions more freedom with displaying their collection and better access to their community, as they are not as financially strained. This point can be expressed through an example of a pop-up held at a local museum, The Buffalo History Museum.

On September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, The Buffalo History Museum held a pop-up event focused on their collection on the grain elevators, aptly titled “Secrets Form the Stacks.”<sup>98</sup> The pop-up display was held from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and consisted of pictures, books, manuscripts, and other items from the Research Library's collection. Guests were able to sit down with the staff ask questions relating to all topics. This personal, one-on-one experience benefited the

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Amy Miller (Assistant Librarian) in discussion with creator, September 2018.

guests and the staff. It gave guests the rare opportunity to speak with staff about a particular topic relating to the City of Buffalo and vice versa.

The museum initially desired to develop this pop-up to promote a new map that the Research Library had produced. This map indicates the locations of grain elevators in Buffalo, NY, and was developed by staff after a guest called to inquire about the locations of the elevators. Upon doing further research, the staff at the museum realized they did not have an accurate and fleshed-out map of the elevators' locations. Upon this discovery the staff decided to create one for the community.<sup>99</sup> Guests can now access this map through the Research Library at the museum.

After the research and development of the map, the museum needed a way to promote it. They decided the best method in which to do this was through a pop-up. The pop-up took an hour to set up, as all of the materials used for the pop-up were already in their collection. The library staff opted to not create labels, and instead greeted each guest personally. Explaining the display and answering each guest's question to the best of their ability, library staff gave each guest a more personalized experience and a better impression of the museum. If staff could not answer a question, they invited a guest to come back during their public hours to conduct their own research. The staff indicated that the most challenging aspect of the pop-up was figuring out whether a guest wanted to engage with the staff or if they just wanted to view the material on their own.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

The staff advertised their pop-up through the museum's tri-monthly newsletter and social media sites. They chose to host the pop-up on September 22, 2018, the Smithsonian's free Museum Day to entice a larger crowd. The museum and pop-up were free. Admission to other pop-up events that they host may not be free but are cleverly paired with other events at the museum to gain more foot traffic.<sup>101</sup>

This local pop-up is a fantastic example for smaller institutions or individuals. The museum took advantage of an event already happening, which increased the amount of people who would view the exhibit, thus succeeding in promoting their new map. They also cleverly used items from their library collection, which was fiscally better for the museum. Since the artifacts were owned by the museum, each one had the same restrictions on them (no photography, etc.) which made handling the materials easier on the staff. This small pop-up was simple for staff to create, an effective resource for the community, and a fiscally smart choice for the museum. For The Buffalo History Museum, the pop-up model had a positive impact.

### **“Instagram Pop-Ups”**

Large, artistic pop-up displays are becoming an increasingly popular trend all around the world. Most of these pop-ups are held in large cities such as New York City, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., London, and Toronto.<sup>102</sup> Large cities have embraced the trend and made it their own. The pop-up community in New York seems to have adopted the name *Spring/Break*

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Sarah Boyd, “The Best Pop-Up Museums To Visit In 2018,” *Forbes*, May 30, 2018, 07:54pm, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sboyd/2018/05/30/pop-up-museums/#302889b87007>.



as a way of indicating their popular artistic installations.<sup>103</sup> These large pop-ups tend to be unrealistic for small institutions to create, as the large displays are often expensive to produce and maintain. These pop-ups share a unique quality of providing hands-on interactive aspects in their displays, which makes them enticing to a new demographic of museum visitors. It is not unusual for these displays to be promoted with the indication that their exhibitions exist for the purpose of being fun and photogenic.<sup>104</sup>

The last couple of years have observed an unprecedented surge in immersive, highly photogenic exhibitions across the globe. This fact is not limited to pop-ups as there have been other types of museum displays involved in this trend, including Yayoi Kusama's traveling exhibit, *Infinity Mirrors, Rain Room* (which was an experiential artwork by Hannes Koch and Florian Ortkrass for the Random International in London) and team Lab's *Transcending Boundaries*, which was held at London's Pace Gallery.<sup>105</sup> The trend is enticing because of the interactivity and the photography factor. These experiences are shared and advertised on multiple social media sites (the most common being Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat), which results in a mass viewing by potential visitors. In a society that is superficially obsessed with sharing their lives through social media, these types of exhibits and pop-ups are perfect methods of display.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Sarah Cascone, "The SPRING/BREAK Fair Keeps Expanding, Now Reclaiming Its Original Home as a Year-Round Art Space," *Artnews*, March 8, 2018, <https://news.artnet.com/market/spring-break-art-show-returns-to-soho-1239680>.

<sup>104</sup> Lara Korte, "Pop-up 'Museums' Are Instagram Fans' Favorite Place to Pose," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 5, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/pop-up-museums-are-instagram-fans-favorite-new-place-to-pose>.

<sup>105</sup> Amanda Hess, "The Existential Void of the Pop-Up 'Experience'," *The New York Times*, September 26, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/26/arts/color-factory-museum-of-ice-cream-rose-mansion>.

<sup>106</sup> Lara Korte, "Pop-up 'Museums' Are Instagram Fans' Favorite Place to Pose," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 5, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/pop-up-museums-are-instagram-fans-favorite-new-place-to-pose>.

The popularity of these pop-ups is impressive given their expensive ticket prices. A single ticket to one of these “Instagram pop-ups” can range anywhere from twenty dollars to forty dollars and sometimes even more.<sup>107</sup> But despite the expensive admission price, tickets sell out in minutes. *Color Factory*, a collaborative interactive exhibit that debuted in San Francisco in August 2017, sold out of their thirty-eight dollars a person tickets in a matter of minutes. *Color Factory* was intended as a month-long interactive pop-up, but due to its immense popularity, it was extended for another eight sold-out months, and as of August 2018, *Color Factory* reopened a second rendition of the exhibition in New York City's SoHo neighborhood.<sup>108</sup>



Image of the Color Factory found on Instagram. More images of Color Factory can be found on their Instagram account: colorfactoryco

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<sup>107</sup> Flora Tsapovsky, “Pop-up ‘Museums’ Target the Selfie Generation,” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, February 1, 2018, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/style/article/Pop-up-museums-target-the-selfie-generation-12544510.php>.

<sup>108</sup> “About,” Colorfactory.co, accessed October 22, 2018, <https://www.colorfactory.co/about>.

The incredible popularity of these pop-ups has even led to the development of additional renditions in other cities. One such rendition is the Museum of Ice Cream, which began as a pop-up in 2016 and later expanded into a few permanent locations. The museum’s founder and creative director, Maryellis Bunn, and a dedicated team of creators, designers, and producers created the pop-up based on a belief in “her vision for an experiential installation inspired by ice cream.”<sup>109</sup> The pop-up began in New York City but its popularity quickly grew attracting approximately 25,500 visitors within two months of opening. The museum even attracted celebrity visitors, including Katy Perry, Kim Kardashian, Gwyneth Paltrow, Drew Barrymore, and on Mother’s Day, Jay-Z, Beyoncé, and Blue Ivy. Due to its fame, the museum expanded into four different locations: New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Miami. The San Francisco exhibit documented that it sold out its first batch of tickets in eighteen minutes.<sup>110</sup>



Image of the Museum of Ice Cream found on Instagram. More photos of the Museum of Ice Cream can be found on their Instagram account: [museumoficecream](https://www.instagram.com/museumoficecream)

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<sup>109</sup> “About,” [museumoficecream.com](https://www.museumoficecream.com/about/), accessed October 21, 2018, <https://www.museumoficecream.com/about/>.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

As the list of large “Instagram pop-ups” expands from *Candytopia*<sup>111</sup> to *The Museum of Pizza*<sup>112</sup>, these museums seem to be taking over the art and museum realm. But no matter how impressive and “fun” these interactive exhibitions may be, it is almost impossible for a small, local institution with limited resources to create a pop-up of this nature. That is not to say that local “Instagram pop-ups” do not exist—they do, but on a smaller, lesser known scale.



Image of Candytopia found on Instagram. More image of Candytopia can be found on their

Instagram account: [thecandytopia](https://www.instagram.com/thecandytopia)

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<sup>111</sup> Sophie Haigney, “The Museums of Instagram,” *The New Yorker*, September 16, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-museums-of-instagram>.

<sup>112</sup> “Museum of the Pizza,” Museum of the Pizza.org, accessed July 25, 2018, <https://www.themuseumofpizza.org/>.



Image of guests in the Mozzarella Room at the Museum of Pizza found on Instagram. More images of the Museum of Pizza can be found on their Instagram account: [themuseumofpizza](https://www.instagram.com/themuseumofpizza)

Pop-ups are becoming increasingly popular in larger cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and Toronto, but smaller cities, such as Buffalo, NY, are not immune to the new craze. Being from Buffalo, most of my personal experiences involving pop-ups revolve around local pop-ups. One such example of smaller, artistic pop-up or an “Instagram pop-up” is *Play/Ground*.<sup>113</sup> The pop-up was created by the organization Resource: Art Project and presented in partnership with Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center and Rochester Contemporary Arts Center. This pop-up was funded through various sponsors such as Bootleg Bucha, The Public, Abaca Press, Takeform, Buffalo Spree, Imagine Staffing, Hotel Henry and WNY Book Arts and included artistic collaboration among artists from all over the county. *Play/Ground* was held in nearby Medina, NY, in the former Medina High School. The pop-up was created to be an

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<sup>113</sup> Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, Resource Art and Rochester Contemporary Art Center, *Play/Ground*, Rochester NY: Western New York Book Arts Center, 2018.

immersive art experience and was meant to engage a person's senses, expand their mind, and inspire their imagination. The exhibit consisted of thirty artistic installations, all created by separate artists. Since this was one of the only "Instagram pop-ups" I was able to personally attend, I observed every detail to determine the probability of a smaller institution being able to replicate this display.

The location of the pop-up was imperative to the village of Medina because the history of the building and the restoration is important to the community members, therefore, any event that is held in the former school will most likely be visited by members of the community. The school was erected in 1924, and the building stands on the ground where the original Victorian-era Medina Academy once stood. The current school was built to replace the Victorian structure, which was too small to accommodate the then growing population. The building was designed by William B. Ittner who is best known for his pedagogical architecture across the United States. His design methodology focused on creating a welcoming environment for both students and teachers. He used what later became known as "open plan," and stretched out the traditional vertical box into H-, U- and E- shaped structures. He filled the school with natural light by lining up the classrooms along a windowed corridor; drew the damp outside with revolutionary ventilation devices; and introduced modern plumbing and fireproofing. William B. Ittner is credited with the design of over 430 schools nationwide and has over 35 buildings on the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>114</sup> The historic building's design added to the aesthetic of the pop-up's artistic installations. Some artists used the natural light, creating intricate shadows

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<sup>114</sup> Kathleen McGarvey, Matthew Mann, and Adam Fenster, "Empty high school becomes a playground for artists exploring memory, nostalgia," *University of Rochester: Newscenter*, November 15, 2018, <http://www.rochester.edu/newscenter/play-ground-art-installation-medina-new-york-memory-nostalgia-350022/>.

and iridescent glass work. The building was well-loved by the community as a school until its closure in the early 1990s. It was then acquired by a local church and used for varying community purposes. The building was then later bought by Roger Hungerford and there are exciting new plans on the horizon for the building, which will most certainly be a fixture of the community once again in the near future.<sup>115</sup>



Image of the old Medina high school. Taken by Mary Kwandras.

The thirty artistic installations in the pop-up were displayed throughout the first floor of the building. Some artwork was installed in stairways, which were blocked-off to prevent guests from interfering in individual rooms and on the school's windows. The first installation covered the entryway of the former high school in an otherworldly, *No-Play Zone* sculpture. This sculpture was intended to represent a deconstructed, sacred geometry. The creator of this piece, Jonathan Casey, is the Founder and Creative Director of Solid716, a Buffalo-based manufacturer of sustainable, multi-functional concrete furniture and accessories. Casey is a self-taught artist

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

who works with many different forms of media, including architecture and fine art.<sup>116</sup> His piece set the theme for the entire show, which seemed to focus on the environment and self-awareness.

The installations occupied various spaces, including stairwells and windows. Another installation was a colorful mural created by artist NC Miller. The piece was a “Metamorphosis,” or a change of the form of a space into a completely different one, through the use of geometric abstraction executed via paint. The artist, NC Miller, is a painter and muralist who has created over a dozen murals in Buffalo, San Francisco, Austin, and Philadelphia. His signature style is achieved using tape and an ombré effect.<sup>117</sup> His work continued the theme of the pop-up, displaying creative use of space and incorporating geometric design.

Melanie Fisher’s immersive nature-themed installation was the first piece of work to inhabit an entire room. Her piece consisted of larger than life, organic forms from another world. These forms were similar to bean sprouts. She incorporated real soil and used foam to create this jarring and realistic effect. Fisher’s work is informed by nature and she builds organic forms that hint at social issues, transcending language to trigger human emotion, relevance, and nostalgia. Her work causes introspective thinking as one ponders the forms referenced in the natural world, and their connection to society.<sup>118</sup>

During the event I had an opportunity to interview Chambliss Giobbi. He was the first artist that was available to talk to during the exhibition. For this pop-up event, Giobbi loaned his

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<sup>116</sup> Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, Resource Art and Rochester Contemporary Art Center, *Play/Ground*, Rochester NY: Western New York Book Arts Center, 2018, 3.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.



*Arcadia* piece. This piece was a large infinity sign that was made to look as if nature created it. Suspended from the ceiling, the piece would rotate freely in the air when people entered the exhibit space. The piece was intended to represent and conjure lost dreams in a looping convergence of exploration, focus, and discovery. Giobbi explained that this piece took him over two years to make and has been displayed at other art shows across the country. This was not the artist's first pop-up experience. He has also displayed his work at pop-up events in Los Angeles and New York City. He created the piece using construction paper, textured spray paint, and faux fur. The trees on the piece were made from construction paper cuttings that were individually glued together. Weighing over 140 pounds, the piece had to be brought in by four men and carefully hung from a structural rod in the ceiling. The artist decided to utilize the backdrop of the piece, the decaying school. He felt this added to the piece and cleverly juxtaposed his piece's meaning of nature prevailing in a decaying world.<sup>119</sup>



Image of Chambliss Giobbi's *Arcadia* piece. Image taken by Mary Kwandras.

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<sup>119</sup> Chambliss Giobbi (Artist) in discussion with the artist, October 2018.

The first immersive installation in the show consisted of entering a starlit environment through a wardrobe. Created by local artist Amanda Besl, this installation encouraged visitors to contemplate the act of “disappearing completely”<sup>120</sup> through the wardrobe. Once inside, a guest entered a small, dark room with hay on the floor and stars on the ceiling—it was as if you had left the city and were transported into the countryside. Amanda Besl is from Buffalo, NY, and is best known for her contemporary surrealist oil paintings which capture intricate still lifes in a candy-color palette. She frequently incorporates botanical references in her imagery and her work often has a haunting undertone, which is something she refers to as “beautiful melancholy.”<sup>121</sup> Speaking with Besl, I discovered that she created this piece specifically for this show, and that this was her first experience with pop-ups.<sup>122</sup> Although it was her first show, her piece encompassed the spirit of modern pop-ups by creating an immersive and personal experience.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Amanda Besl (Artist) in discussion with the artist, October 2018.



Image of Amanda Besl's wardrobe piece. Image taken by Mary Kwandras.

Located in the gymnasium of the school were three artistic installations: near the entrance was Besl's wardrobe; near the windows was an installation created by Ginny O'Brien; and in the center was a large installation by Michael Bosworth. O'Brien's installation consisted of monumental cloth banners that featured abstract designs. The artist invited guests to create their own designs that would be printed on cloth as a way to "prove that they were here." O'Brien is a painter and fiber artist who teaches studio and lecture courses in design.<sup>123</sup> Bosworth's installation, *In the Lull of the Waves on the Low Lee Shore*, consisted of large white lanterns that utilized water, electricity, projection, and light to create a sublime atmosphere. The lanterns took up most of the gymnasium. Guests were encouraged to lay on the floor and observe the elements within the shade. Bosworth is a photographer, sculptor, and installation artist. The interactive

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

elements of these installations make them appealing to a new demographic of museum visitors.<sup>124</sup> Drawing non-traditional demographics is a positive and unexpected result of pop-ups, including this one.



Image of Michael Bosworth's installation, *In the Lull of the Waves on the Low Lee Shore*. Ginny O'Brien's installation can be seen in the background. Image taken by Mary Kwandras.

Immersive, full-room installations continued throughout the pop-up and included *A Star Shaped Environment* by artist Virginia Melnyk,<sup>125</sup> *A Balloon Filled Room* by Kyla Kegler,<sup>126</sup> and a visual, tactile, and interactive experience created by artists Coryn Kempster and Julia

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, Resource Art and Rochester Contemporary Art Center, *Play/Ground*, Rochester NY: Western New York Book Arts Center, 2018, 5.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 6.

Jamrozik.<sup>127</sup> For each of these installations, a guest was encouraged to physically immerse themselves into the art. For instance, in the star-shaped room, a guest could stand or lay under different colored star-shaped tents. Similarly, in the balloon room, guests were encouraged to grab, toss, and walk among the balloon-filled floor. To view the entirety of Kempster's and Jamrozik's installation, a guest had to walk through streamer-like material that hung from the ceiling. Each installation was a unique experience that represented the mindfulness of people and their environment.



Image of A Star Shaped Environment by artist Virginia Melnyk. Image taken by Mary Kwandras.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 6.



Image of A Balloon Filled Room by Kyla Kegler. Image by Mary Kwandras.

Other room-sized installations created a meaningful experience through sculpture work, paintings, and other forms of installations. These included *A Classroom Within a Classroom*, created by the Buffalo Institute for Contemporary Art (performed by Nando Alvarez-Perez and Emily Ebba Reynolds);<sup>128</sup> Kyle Butler's *A Curtain Wall*;<sup>129</sup> an exploration of current pop culture by artist Katherine McMahon!;<sup>130</sup> John C. Santomieri's *Cultivating Weeds*;<sup>131</sup> an intensive investigation of classrooms past by artist Layla Rye;<sup>132</sup> a foam dreamscape by artist Colleen

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 6.

Toledano;<sup>133</sup> Amanda Browder's *A Spectral Locus*;<sup>134</sup> a blackboard layered with scientific notations by artist Adam David Brown;<sup>135</sup> Robert Bell's *Room with a View*;<sup>136</sup> Virocode's (artists Andrea Mancuso and Peter D'Auria) *Renatured*;<sup>137</sup> an installation of large sculptural forms by artist Jim Morris;<sup>138</sup> an installation by Allen C. Topolski;<sup>139</sup> an engaging sound scape by artist Yvette Granata;<sup>140</sup> and Reinhard Reitzenstein's *Add a Little to a Little and There Will Be a Great Help*.<sup>141</sup> These artists created separate room-sized installations that corresponded with the pop-ups overarching theme of the environment and self-awareness. Although each installation was unique, the artists' collaboration brought the overarching theme to life.

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 10.

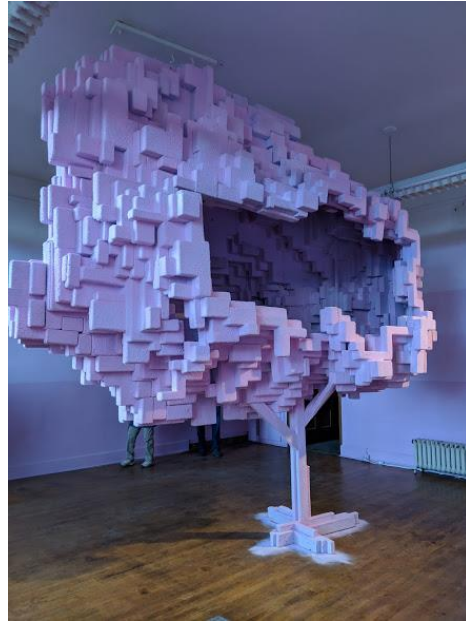


Image of a foam dreamscape by artist Colleen Toledano. Image taken by Mary Kwandras.

Other installations in this pop-up were located in the school's stairways, small washrooms, and the hallways. These uniquely placed exhibits encompassed the nature of pop-ups by utilizing unusual spaces to create exhibits (or in this case, installations). An installation by artist Bethany Krull was comprised of a built environment at the bottom of one of the schools staircases. The installation included a fake alligator and realistic-looking grass.<sup>142</sup> Similarly, Elizabeth Copper utilized one of the school's staircases to create angels doing somersaults and acrobatics as well as an ascending poem on the steps.<sup>143</sup> Catherine Heard created the installation *Golem II* located in a small, dimly lit washroom.<sup>144</sup> Julian Montague created a mural consisting of

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 9.



six paintings located in one of the school's hallways.<sup>145</sup> These artists created novel installations in unusual places which heightened the overall creativity and uniqueness of the entire exhibition.



Image of an installation by artist Bethany Krull. Image by Mary Kwandras.

The pop-up *Play/Ground* was unique and effective. The cohesiveness of the artistic installations adds to the overarching effect of the pop-up. The unusual location of the entire show and the unique placement of certain installations make this exhibition a “textbook” “pop-up. The interactivity of individual installations encompasses the modern “trend” of “Instagram pop-ups.” This exhibition, although unique on its own, is truly a great example of what artists and art museums can create to reach a broader audience and possibly a different demographic, and in turn create a positive experience for members of a community.

The sheer mass of this pop-up was obtainable in this community because the organization Resource: Art Project reached out to artists from around the country. This method was clearly

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 5.

effective in developing a fun, interactive, and popular display. Although not every small museum or art gallery will be able to create a pop-up on this scale, networking could make it possible for smaller institutions to create similar displays on a slightly smaller scale with the right resources. This notion can be observed in another local pop-up museum: Buffalo Obscura, which takes its name from a local artist collective.<sup>146</sup> Although this pop-up was not as intricate as *Play/Ground*, it was still able to reach a broad audience within the City of Buffalo.

A few of the more unique and popular shows in Buffalo have been hosted by the artist group Buffalo Obscura, which was founded by David Torke, Chris Hawley, Molly Jarboe, and Christian Laing. Buffalo Obscura is described on their website as:

A photography collective that hosts an ongoing series of photography pop-up shows presented in obscure locations and featuring photography about Buffalo. The one-night-only happenings have included some of Buffalo's best city documenters in high profile, exceedingly well attended events.<sup>147</sup>

All of their pop-ups consist of Buffalo photography and are mission-oriented. To date, all of their events have been hosted in old, previously abandoned buildings that are historically significant to Buffalonians.

The group's first pop-up was held on Friday, February 24, 2017, at the Saddle Up Saloon, located at 55 Hubbard Street. Entitled *Buffalo East*, this pop-up was the first installment of their ongoing series of Buffalo based photography. The show featured photographers and founding members Christina Laing, Molly Jarboe, Chris Hawley, and David Torke. *Buffalo East* focused

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<sup>146</sup> "Buffalo Obscura," *BuffaloObscura.com*, accessed December 10, 2018, <https://buffaloobscura.com/>.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

on the hidden and not-so-hidden parts of Buffalo's East Side. Four photographers, each coming from distinct vantage points, brought their work to perhaps the most obscure and forgotten tavern in the city. The group aimed to bring this place, and its neighborhood, to a new audience.<sup>148</sup>

Buffalo Obscura's second pop-up, *Buffalo Works: Photography Pop-Up*, took place at Buffalo Paint & Wallpaper, located at 2917 Bailey Avenue, on Friday, May 19, 2017, from 6:00 p.m. to midnight. The show featured photographers, Brendan Bannon, Joe George, Chris Hawley, Molly Jarboe, Dinesh Joseph, Lloyd Mitchell, Kate Stapleton Parzych, Laird Robertson, and David Torke. *Buffalo Works* focused on the people, places, and things that represent the city at work. The pop-up focused on Buffalo as a whole. Bailey Avenue was chosen as a location because "it is often overlooked."<sup>149</sup> *Buffalo Works* used photography to reveal the historic changes to the city's economy, as well as the resilience of survivors of its economic transition. "The pop-up asked the question: what is Buffalo's economy, and where might it be going?"<sup>150</sup> Buffalo Paint & Wallpaper, formerly known as Schnitter's Paint & Wallpaper, is a family-owned and operated business serving the Kensington-Bailey neighborhood since 1983.

The group's fourth event (the third is not featured on their website) featured photographers Scott Balzer, Dan Cogliano, Matthew Christopher, Jim Cieloncki, Chris Hawley, Ed Healy, Molly Jarboe, Christina Laing, Nancy J. Parisi, Mike Puma, Daniel Seiders, and David Torke. The show entitled *Buffalo's Back Yard: Photography Pop-Up* was held for one day only, Friday, September 7, 2018, from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at the Lyth Cottage, 16 Harwood Place.

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

*Buffalo's Back Yard* focused on the hidden, the private, and the seldom seen of Buffalo. The event itself took place in one of the most intriguing back yards of the city, behind a Hamlin Park cottage which was saved from demolition back in 2011. The Lyth Cottage is a long, abandoned historic house that was built in 1868 by John Lyth, a terra cotta manufacturer. The City of Buffalo sold this house for \$1 to two young professionals, who have since rehabilitated the cottage as their home.<sup>151</sup>

Continuing their pop-up trend, Buffalo Obscura hosted another pop-up on Friday, April 20, 2018, at Liberty Seneca, 2221 Seneca Street, which was entitled *Buffalo South: Photography Pop-Up*. The nine photographers featured in the show were Jim Cielencki, Shannon Davis, Lindsay DeDario, Chris Hawley, Molly Jarboe, Christina Laing, David Torke, Tom Warner, and Gene Witkowski. Their work focused on the people, places, and things that represent the City of Buffalo south of the Interstate 190 and east of Michigan Avenue. The pop-up was held in the Liberty Seneca, a former Liberty Bank branch designed in a Sullivanesque style and built in 1921. This pop-up created the opportunity for Buffalonians to view the interior architectural details for the first time in decades. The building was recently purchased by Schneider Development with plans for a historic rehabilitation.<sup>152</sup>

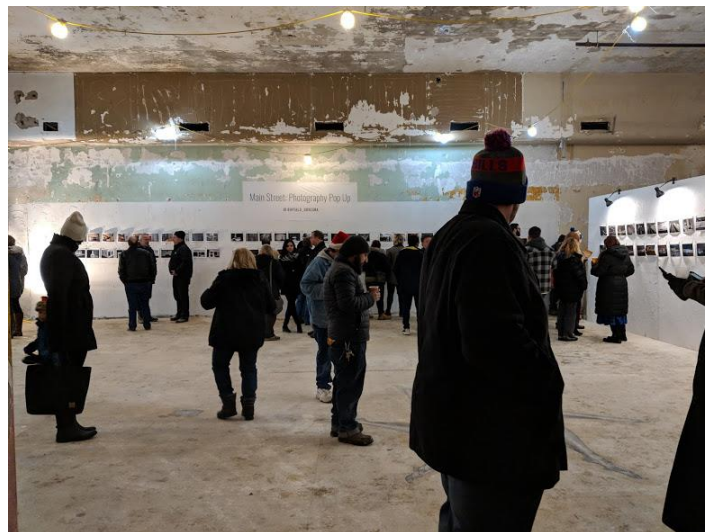
Buffalo Obscura's latest installment of their pop-up series was held in one of Buffalo's most beloved historic shop buildings, the former AM&A's department store, located at 377 Main Street. The pop-up was held for one night only on Friday, December 7, 2018, from 6:00 p.m. to

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

11:00 p.m. The *Main Street: Photography Pop-Up* photographs focused on the literal and the representative of Main Street. Featured artists included photographers Brendan Bannon, Joel Brenden, Linda Gellman, Chris Hawley, Molly Jarboe, Christina Laing, Amy Luraschi, Greg Meadows, Tom Schmitt, Ginny Rose Stewart, and David Torke, and visual artist Chris Kameck. The AM&A's department store had been located on Main Street in downtown Buffalo starting in 1867, moved to 377 Main Street in 1960, and closed in 1995. The department store reopened and closed in 1998 and has been vacant since. In 2015, a New York City-based development group purchased the building and began a gradual rehabilitation. This pop-up gave the public an opportunity to enter the building for the first time in 20 years. The event was the fifth photography pop-up organized by Buffalo Obscura.<sup>153</sup> The Main Street pop-up was the only pop-up in Buffalo Obscura's series of pop-ups that I was able to personally witness. The pop-up was well-put-together and very well-received by the community. Although the building did not have heat, the event drew a large crowd and even a news crew.



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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

Image of guests enjoying Buffalo Obscura's Main Street Pop-up. Image by Mary Kwandras.

The pop-ups held by the photography group, Buffalo Obscura are simple and unique but create an emotionally powerful display for the residents of Buffalo. The locations of the pop-ups and the photography involved create an opportunity for Buffalonians to revisit the city's past. Each event has been well-received and digitally documented by the residents in Buffalo via social media. For these reasons, the pop-ups hosted by Buffalo Obscura fit very well in the "Instagram Pop-up" category.

Pop-ups are unique and come in all forms and sizes. They can be created by anyone on any topic, anywhere, and at any time. "Instagram pop-ups" may not be entirely feasible for all museum personal to create, but still offer a unique experience. This view has the potential to change the public view of museums. Smaller artistic pop-ups are seemingly more feasible for institutions, as is proven by the pop-up *Play/Ground* and Buffalo Obscura's series of pop-ups. There are an unlimited number of possibilities for museum professionals to explore when it comes to the creation of pop-ups.

## Chapter 5: Howard D. Beach Photography Pop-Up Exhibit

To better understand the recent phenomena of pop-ups I created my own pop-up. Due to limited resources, funding and time, the pop-up I created was small, similar to an exhibit that could be made by any institution. Additionally, I wanted to create a pop-up to test their reputation of being easy to develop, inexpensive, and a creative form of advertising. Using the research I had previously done on pop-ups I was conscious of the issues involved in the process. I knew I needed to focus a lot of time and energy into advertising, and be mindful of my budget in order to ensure a successful exhibition.

For a simple reference in exhibition development, I referenced *How to Make a Pop Up Museum—An Organizer's Guide*.<sup>154</sup> The guide is based off of Michelle DelCarlo's concept of a pop-up museum, which is referenced within the guide and offers step-by-step instructions on the development process. The guide begins with this definition and offers encouragement, ensuring the reader that anyone can create a pop-up museum:

A Pop Up Museum is a temporary exhibit created by the people who show up to participate. It works by choosing a theme and venue and then inviting people to bring an object on-topic to share, like a community show-and-tell. Each participant writes a label for his or her object and puts it on display. A Pop Up Museum usually lasts for a few hours on one day, and focuses on bringing people together in conversation through stories, art, and objects. There are many ways to have a Pop Up Museum. And anyone can have one. This is a Pop Up Museum Organizer's Kit. It offers a step-by-step guide on how to create a Pop Up Museum. At the end of the kit you will find Pop Up Museum Supplies, which can help you design your Pop Up Museum. But remember, the Pop Up Museum is not

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<sup>154</sup> Nora Grant, *How to Make a Pop Up Museum—An Organizer's Guide*, ed. Nina Simon, (Santa Cruz: Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History, 2013).

a one-size-fits-all event. Have fun discovering what makes YOUR museum pop.<sup>155</sup>

I chose to utilize the guide because it specifically follows DelCarlo's version of a pop-up. However, my development process differed from the guide in multiple ways. For instance, DelCarlo's original pop-up method relies on the community to bring objects with them and display them for a short period of time.<sup>156</sup> My theme focused on Buffalo State's Museum Studies Master's students and the projects they have created by using the Howard D. Beach Photography collection. I gathered the projects ahead of time and personally wrote labels based on their work (with the students' permission and approval). This method was necessary because some of the projects chosen were created by Buffalo State Alumni who were no longer in the area. Additionally my pop-up exceed DelCarlo's "rule" of how long a pop-up should be held (1-2 hours).<sup>157</sup> My pop-up lasted approximately 3 weeks, but was only able to be viewed for about nine days due to the venue's hours of operation. There were a few rules that I was able to abide by, such as DelCarlo's suggestion of holding a pop-up in a non-traditional venue.<sup>158</sup> Taking this advice to heart, I was able to hold my pop-up at the Karpeles Manuscript Library in Buffalo, NY, due to pervious interaction with the director of the museum. The library is located in an old repurposed church on Porter Avenue, on Buffalo's West Side. This unusual location was a perfect venue for the pop-up formula; however working on an offsite location came with its own challenges. The location had a specific set of hours that were challenging to work around, since

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 4.



the venue was only open for a few hours a week there was not a lot of time for guests to visit my exhibit. I was able to install and uninstall my exhibit while the museum was closed to the public. I was also given the option to have an opening and closing reception (due to my own personal schedule I was not able to hold a closing reception) to increase visitation. If I were to develop another pop-up museum, I would like to consider the possibility of a location that has more public viewing hours, or change the timing of the exhibition to when the library has more public viewing hours. Additionally, I choose to use the term pop-up “exhibit” rather than “museum” because of the way I modified DelCarlo’s original method.

According to *How to Make a Pop Up Museum—An Organizer’s Guide*, the first step in developing a pop-up exhibit begins with choosing a theme or conversation. When choosing a theme, the guide provides a variety of idea methods such as: catering to a specific audience, choosing a theme based on availability of objects, choosing a narrative theme, and/or choosing a theme that excites you. They also provide a few examples of common themes which are: Homemade, Trash or Treasure, Ordinary Miracles, Taking Risks, and Lost and Found.<sup>159</sup>

The theme I decided to focus on was the Howard D. Beach Photography Collection and the Museum Studies Graduate Program at Buffalo State College. The Howard D. Beach Photography Studio Collection is currently owned by The Buffalo History Museum. The collection contains an estimated 57,000 dry plate glass negatives, along with acetate and nitrate film negatives, business documents, and personal documents that date from the late 1880s to the mid-1950s. The collection was donated to the museum in 2011, by the Giallombardo family.

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 7–9.

Since acquiring the collection, the Buffalo History Museum has entrusted the care and preservation of the collection to the Museum Studies Graduate Program at Buffalo State College. The exhibit focused on projects that students created by utilizing the collection. The exhibition was aptly named: *The Howard D. Beach Collection and the Buffalo State Museum Studies Master's Program*. Projects ranged from general class assignments to material presented during past Buffalo Graduate Student Fairs and included a few samples from past master's thesis projects.

I choose this theme for a few different reasons. First, knowing I had limited time (about one month) to create a pop-up, I wanted to ensure that I could gather enough objects; in my case the objects were research projects to develop a fully-realized exhibit. For the purposes of utilizing the pop-up development guide, I choose my theme based on the availability of objects. Secondly, I wanted to touch on one of my original goals of “testing a pop-ups advertising ability” which led me to the idea of advertising the Buffalo State Museum Studies Graduate Program and The Buffalo History Museum. This method allowed me to test out my main goals in one overarching theme.

As a personal goal, I wanted to ensure that the exhibit I built would be enticing to the public. To do this I needed to properly explain the background of the project, which entailed a detailed explanation of the collection and the museum studies program. I developed two introduction panels, one explaining the Howard D. Beach Photography Studio Collection and a second panel describing the Museum Studies Graduate Program. The first introductory panel of the exhibition reads as follows:

The Howard D. Beach Photography Studio Collection contains an estimated 57,000 dry plate glass negatives, along with acetate and nitrate film negatives, business documents, and personal documents that date from the late 1880s to the mid-1950s. The collection originates from the Howard D. Beach Photography Studio, which was once located at 469 Virginia Street, Buffalo, NY. This collection sat in the studio building for nearly 60 years after Beach's death, remaining almost completely untouched. Then in 2011, The Buffalo History Museum acquired the collection from the Giallombardo family.

Since acquiring the collection, the Buffalo History Museum has entrusted the care and preservation of the collection to the Museum Studies Graduate Program at Buffalo State College. Students learn the correct methods in which to care for the artifacts. Students and faculty have created numerous research projects based on the images or objects related to the collection. Research in the collection can take many different directions into various disciplines/fields and build on the experience and knowledge students may already possess through their own learning. Out of the projects that students have produced, a select few were chosen to be the center of this pop-up exhibit.<sup>160</sup>

I chose to include this panel in such a way that exemplifies the origins of the collection and the importance it has to the city of Buffalo. Furthermore, this panel specifies the magnitude of the collection, which helps a guest fathom the difficulties and importance of this preservation work. The second introduction panel focused on the Museum Studies Graduate Program at Buffalo State and reads as follows:

The Museum Studies Master of Arts program is designed for those interested in pursuing a career in museums. The program utilizes a multidisciplinary approach including both theoretical instruction and practical experience to prepare students for a career in the field. In addition to a set of core courses, students specialize in one of three fields of museum work, collections management and curatorial, visitor experience and education, and museum operations. Each student works closely with an academic advisor to develop a program that will position him or her as an innovator who will serve the broad and changing needs of both collections and communities. Each student must prepare a master's thesis paper or

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<sup>160</sup> Figure 6.

project, the following pop-up exhibit is a museum studies master's project created by Mary Langille-Kwandas.<sup>161</sup>

This panel is just as important as the first, because the exhibit consists of projects students in the program developed using this specific collection. This panel not only explains the program in depth, but it also indicates the purpose and goal of this exhibit.

Along with the two introduction panels, there was a third panel explaining challenges students have faced while working with the collection. This included examples of damaged glass plate negatives. Preexisting damage, which could have resulted from water (the collection was subjected to a flood at some point during its 60 years underground), light damage, or from being broken was given as an example. The panel emphasizes the negative effects this damage has had on obtaining the history of Buffalo, but reassures the viewer that there are only a small percentage of damaged negatives. The text for this panel reads as follows:

The Howard D. Beach Photography Studio Collection was left untouched in the basement of his studio for nearly 60 years. Because of this, a number of glass plate negatives have been damaged. These negatives may show signs of light and water damage, and may be fused together. Often, this damage results in parts or the entirety of the image disappearing. Some images of individuals may still be shown, but without a name or corresponding negative number, research cannot be conducted and the history of that negative is lost.<sup>162</sup>

This panel included visual examples of damaged negatives and further explained how they were damaged. My desire with this panel was to help explain the difficulties students could face in the caring for this collection. Generally, students have more issues with researching the people

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<sup>161</sup> Figure 7.

<sup>162</sup> Figure 5. (Located inside case)

and/or objects within the collection than they do caring for the collection. But I wanted to express to the public the potential physical issues to hopefully add an educational factor in the exhibit regarding preservation issues, to better teach the public.

The physical objects chosen for this exhibit included a wide range of projects developed by master's students since 2011. These included three posters from a previous Graduate Research Fair, a handmade Red Cross dress, framed pastel paintings created by Howard D. Beach, a list of businesses that Beach interacted with, Howard D. Beach's formula book, photos of Beach himself, a speech by his daughter, Margret Beach, and a damaged negative. Each object had a corresponding label that explained how each student used an object or subject to develop a project. DeCarlo's traditional pop-up museum suggests letting the guests who contribute an object write their own label.<sup>163</sup> For time purposes, I opted to write the labels myself, which resulted in somewhat plain labels, as they simply explain what the object is. If I had more time, I would have liked to give each student the opportunity to create their own didactic label. This way, I would be truer to the original pop-up museum model and it would have allowed the students to be more involved with the exhibition process.

To conclude the exhibit, I wanted to include an acknowledgement panel. DeCarlo's guide does not say anything about this, but because of the way I developed the exhibit, I wanted to ensure proper credit was given to those involved. This panel reads as follows:

This exhibit would not be possible without the assistance of the following people and organizations:

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 4.

The Buffalo State Museum Studies Faculty

The Buffalo History Museum

The Giallombardo Family

Chris Kelley Director of the Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum

Museum Studies students and alumni: Ashley Carney, Adam Barns, Kim Bruckman, Nellie Slocum, and Spencer Stulak.

Special thanks to Noelle Wiedemer, Lecturer, Museum Studies Program and Dr. Cynthia Conides, Director of the Museum Studies Program for guiding me through the creation of this pop-up exhibition.<sup>164</sup>

I wanted to ensure that each student whose project was in the exhibit was properly acknowledged, as well as the organizations involved with the Howard D. Beach Photography Studio Collection. I gave a special thanks to my two advisors of this project for their continued advice and guidance throughout this exhibit's development process.

Michelle DelCarlo's pop-up guide provides advice on developing every aspect of a pop-up, including set up and what the host should be doing during the time the museum is open. To save on expenses, the guide recommends using limited supplies that are easy to come by, such as folding tables and chairs, table cloths, labels, pens and pencils, and frames for photographs. The original pop-up formula requires a pop-up to be held for only a few hours where guests bring the objects and create their own labels, so the list of recommended supplies is rational.<sup>165</sup> For my exhibit, since the Karpeles Manuscript Library requested I keep the display up for a few weeks rather than a few hours, I spent a bit more on supplies and used other means of display. The

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<sup>164</sup> Figure 8.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 16–20.

Karpeles Manuscript Library was kind enough to let me use one of their display cases and some rolling panels to place objects and labels. This made installation easier for me and safer for the objects. As stated before, I chose to create my own labels however, I found this to be my greatest expense (I did receive some funding from Buffalo State's Graduate Student Association, but this did not cover all of my expenses) and would not recommend this process for anyone building a pop-up on a very limited budget. My advice to anyone building a pop-up on a similar budget would be to have guests write their own labels, or find an alternative method to a professional print shop.

One of the greatest challenges of hosting a pop-up is attracting visitors. With this being the case, promoting a pop-up becomes one of the most important factors in the development process. DelCarlo even dedicated a section of her guide to inviting people to the pop-up as a form of promotion.<sup>166</sup> To promote my pop-up, I developed a flyer for the exhibit and shared it via social media sites.<sup>167</sup> Furthermore, I managed to gain promotions from the organizations involved in the exhibit itself; the Museum Studies Master's program and The Buffalo History Museum both shared my flyer via their social media sites (specifically Facebook.) Promotion through social media was the most effective method of advertising for me, due to my limited time frame.

The official opening of this exhibit was January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Unfortunately, the turn-out for the opening was meager due to poor weather, however, a few people came the day of and more came the following day. The exhibit was open until February

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 14–15.

<sup>167</sup> Figure 1.

8<sup>th</sup>. As I could not be at the exhibit every day it was open, I included a guest book where visitors could leave their name and leave a comment. Despite the poor weather conditions throughout the exhibit's duration, it was very well-received. The comments included within the guest book were encouraging and supportive of the exhibit and the Museum Studies Program.

My personal experience in developing a pop-up exhibit was enlightening. The development process of this pop-up was similar to my other experiences in exhibition development, but simplified. Traditional museum exhibitions can take years of planning and configuring to ensure perfection. As there are fewer elements when developing pop-up and exhibits, I personally felt less pressure to make it "perfect." During the process of producing my pop-up, I felt I had more creative liberty because it was located outside of a traditional museum setting. The ease of developing a pop-up validates their value, and in my opinion, their worth.



## Chapter 6: Conclusion Evaluating the Pop-Up phenomenon

### Are Pop-Ups Problematic?

Pop-ups are short-term exhibitions that can be created inside or outside of the confines of a traditional museum exhibition setting. They exist in temporary and unexpected places and, as a general rule, create strong community bonds.<sup>168</sup> But when one compares the pop-up museum to the official definition of a museum adopted by The International Council of Museums (ICOM), some issues surface and subsequently raise some questions. The main question refers to whether or not pop-ups can be considered true museums, as they do not meet the qualifications of ICOM's definition. This brings up additional questions about whether or not the definition of a museum should be changed to include the pop-up. The questions arise mainly from the notion that pop-ups are not "Permanent Institutions."<sup>169</sup> But one of the fundamental qualities of pop-ups is their spontaneity and sporadic timing. It is because they come and go in unusual timeframes and places that make pop-ups successful. So, my main question is, if pop-ups continue to prove successful, should the definition of a museum be altered to include pop-ups? Whether or not ICOM will change their definition is unknown, but for now, the pop-up phenomenon seems too "new" to expect such a change.

Instagram pop-ups are becoming exceedingly more popular, but also raise questions about authority, reliability, educational value, and research. Many critics of the widespread

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<sup>168</sup> A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.

<sup>169</sup> "Missions and objectives," icom.museum, accessed October 22, 2018, <https://icom.museum/en/about-us/missions-and-objectives/>.

displays argue that they make a mockery of traditional museums and often prefer to categorize them as “experiences” rather than museums.<sup>170</sup> Critics argue that a traditional museum facilitates meaning-making between the viewer and the artifact. Pop-ups give the visitor the opportunity to be up close and personal to artifacts and in some cases interact with the exhibit. Pop-up “experiences” are often described as “Instagram museums,” but the real experience for a guest plays out only after a visitor posts their photographic evidence on social media. The internet is an increasingly visual space and these museums with their enormous pools of candy and gargantuan emoji props are designed to attract attention through “shares” and “likes.” Many find these Instagram pop-ups to be a disappointment and often seem narcissistic to museum goers, as they are generally used to self-promote the visitor and not the museum itself.<sup>171</sup> Despite criticism, most reviewers enjoyed their time at pop-ups. While criticism relating to the modern trend of “Instagram pop-ups” was plentiful, I found no negative criticism relating to Michelle DelCarlo’s model of pop-ups.

There is no solid answer to the question “are pop-ups problematic.” Like all things, there are positive and negative connotations to this method of display. Smaller pop-ups seem more practical and offer an institution the opportunity to educate their community beyond their walls. “Instagram pop-ups” such as Candytopia and The Museum of Ice Cream do not often offer an education value to their display, but they are enjoyable to visit and create a possible segue for a new demographic of museum visitors to engage in the museum realm.

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<sup>170</sup> Amanda Hess, “The Existential Void of the Pop-Up ‘Experience’,” *The New York Times*, September 26, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/26/arts/color-factory-museum-of-ice-cream-rose-mansion/>.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

## What do Pop-Ups do for the Community?

What do pop-ups ultimately do for society? They have the potential to make museums more accessible, socially intellectually, emotionally, and physically. This idea of “taking it to the streets” represents the convergence of several different people from all walks of life. They bring people together and encourage the start of new dialogs. They create a unique opportunity for museum professionals to display their collection, advertise their institution, and reach new audiences.<sup>172</sup>

Since pop-ups are flexible, they are able to merge with different economic trends. Setting up temporary, low-cost, low-risk experiential sites, such as pop-ups, is an efficient way to promote a museum or business. The efficient cost also allows museum professionals to develop exhibits with more ease, as there are fewer expenses to keep track of.<sup>173</sup>

Younger generations (Millennials and Gen Z) seem to have changed their perception of large, high-end stores and expensive endeavors; as they may feel that these types of institutions are trying to sway their opinions on culture without providing proper research or context. Pop-ups can be a way for museums to subtly reach new audiences without giving them the impression that they are being pressured into having controversial conversations. Small pop-ups can give an impression of revitalization and localism in action. This gives a community a sense of pride in their own neighborhood. Pop-ups also act as a reaction to the ever-growing and plugged-in

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<sup>172</sup> Elizabeth Merritt, “Taking Museums to Where the People Are,” *American Alliance of Museums*, last modified May 22, 2018, <https://www.aam-us.org/2018/05/22/taking-museums-to-where-the-people-are/>.

<sup>173</sup> “Trendswatch 2012 Museums and the Pulse for the Future,” *American Alliance of Museums*, accessed July 31, 2018, [https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2012\\_trendswatch.pdf](https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2012_trendswatch.pdf), pgs.10-13.

world. They create face-to-face and participatory experiences, especially in unexpected places, and can serve as a possible counterweight to digital, virtual experiences.<sup>174</sup>

### **What Do Pop-Ups Do for Museums?**

Small, temporary, flexible exhibitions beyond the museum walls can provide opportunities for innovation and experimentation. Working outside of a museum's political structure can mean that employees can work more quickly to build an exhibition. The flexibility of pop-ups means curators can create more exhibitions and tailor them to the needs of their own personal beliefs or their community. Subsequently, taking a museum into the community can assist museums in reaching newer audiences. They can help to sway negative stereotypical views of museums and make grand the perception of institutional buildings less imposing.<sup>175</sup>

Pop-ups are fantastic tools for museums to utilize, especially for institutions that are strapped for funds, as the materials used to create them are easily acquired and inexpensive. But museums should keep in mind that they still must work hard to keep their newly obtained audiences engaged after the initial introduction. Pop-ups can be a low-cost, low-risk way to experiment with permanent locations for the purpose of developing new museums, or to create satellite locations for already established museums. Pop-ups need to be advertised well and need to be held in a location where the audiences can patriciate. Museums should choose their locations wisely to achieve a successful pop-up experience.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Elizabeth Merritt, "Taking Museums to Where the People Are," *America Alliance of Museums*, last modified May 22, 2018, <https://www.aam-us.org/2018/05/22/taking-museums-to-where-the-people-are/>.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

## Are Pop-Ups a Worthy Endeavor for Museums?

The simple answer here is yes; pop-ups are an effective tool that museums should use. Why? Pop-ups are a flexible means of display that can be developed by anyone on almost any topic. They can be as expensive or inexpensive as the developer desires and they can be located anywhere. Pop-ups can assist in expanding a museum<sup>177</sup> and bring a museum out into a community. There seems to be endless possibilities for museums that choose to delve into the trend. With ample advertising and a conscientious mindful approach, pop-ups are an effective means of ephemeral display that can be made with ease. Proof of this fact can be found in the pop-up exhibit that I have personally created. The pop-up was relatively easy to create, financially feasible, and advertised a college program and a cultural institution. Pop-ups are unorthodox means of display and can even challenge the traditional museum model. But this type of experimentation can create a positive impact on a museum's community and serve newer, younger demographics. My personal advice to any individual or institution that is hesitant to experiment with the pop-up is to visit both small institutional pop-ups and larger "Instagram pop-ups" before deciding which method is best for you.

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<sup>177</sup> Elizabeth Merritt and Katie Spencer, "Pop-ups and Emerging Museums," *American Alliance of Museums*, last modified February 28, 2013, <https://www.aam-us.org/2013/02/28/pop-ups-and-emerging-museums/>.

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## Appendix A

**Pop-up Exhibit: The Howard D. Beach Collection and the Buffalo State Museum Studies Masters Program.**

Explore the Howard D. Beach Photography Collection through the work of Graduate Students at Buffalo State.

Learn about the challenges SUNY Buffalo State students face when researching and preserving one of Buffalo's most complete collections.

**Grand Opening**  
 January 20<sup>th</sup> 1pm-3pm  
 Karpeles Manuscript Library  
 453 Porter Ave  
 Buffalo, NY 14201  
 Free Admission

**Additional Exhibit Hours**  
 Sunday, Monday, Tuesday  
 11am-4pm  
 January 20<sup>th</sup>- February 8<sup>th</sup>






Figure 1. Flyer for the Howard D. Beach Studio Collection and the Buffalo State Museum Studies Master's Program Flyer.



Figure 2. Panel set up before installation.



Figure 3. Label set up before installation.



Figure 4. Set up of artifacts and labels in main case.



Figure 5. Final set up of artifacts in main case.

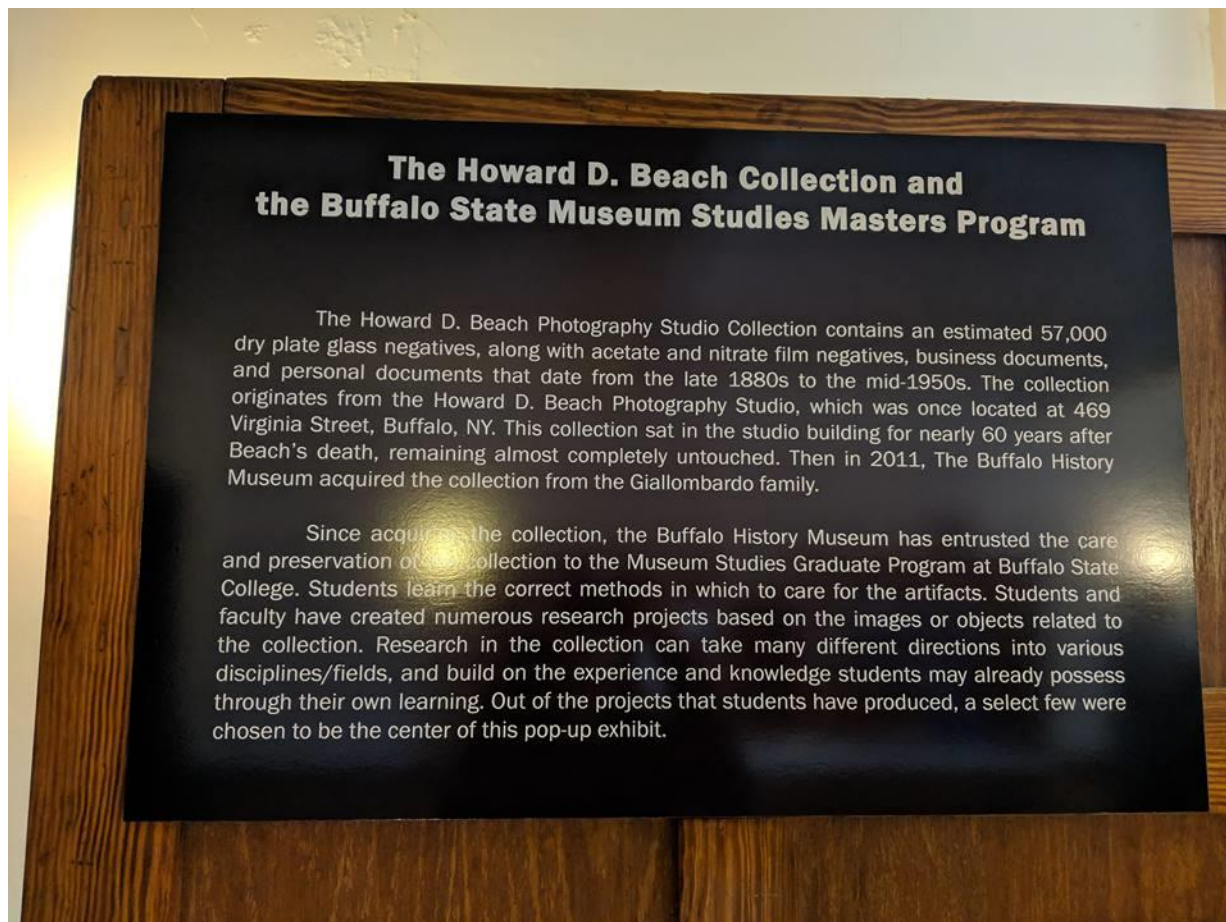


Figure 6. First panel for pop-up exhibit.

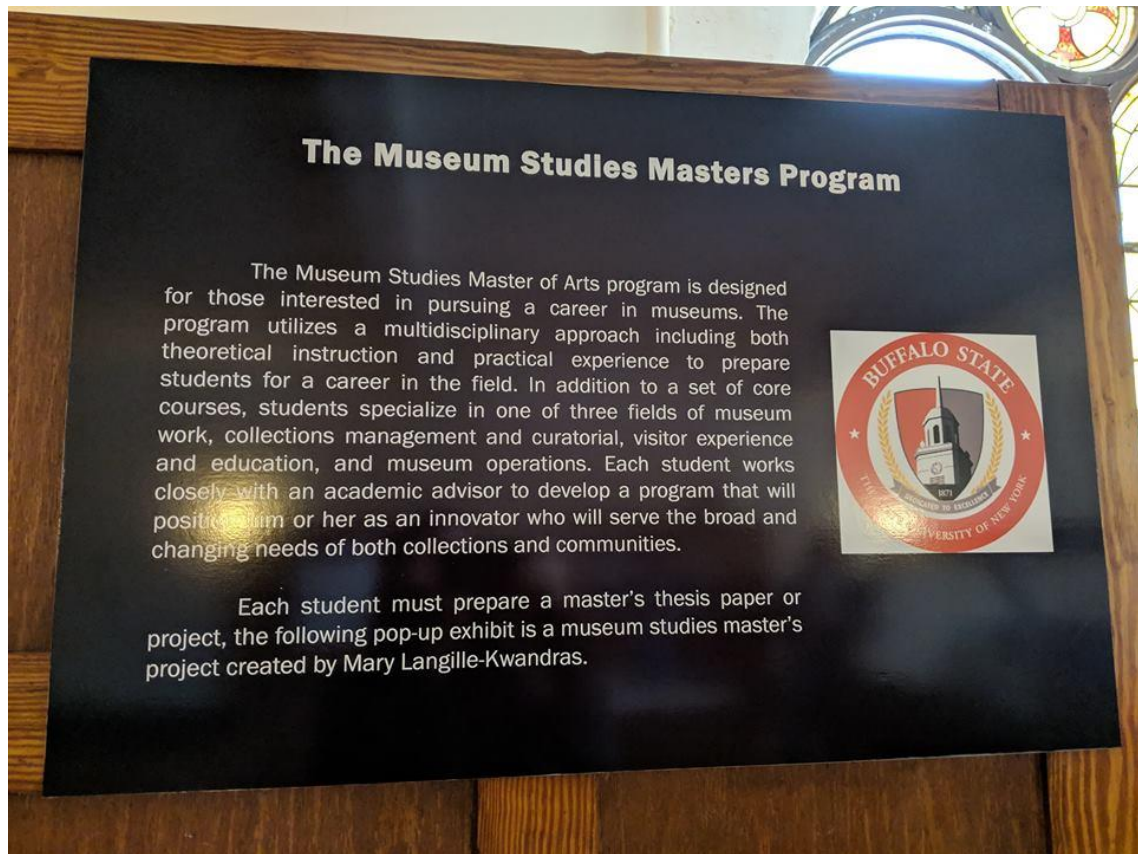


Figure 7. Second panel for pop-up exhibit.

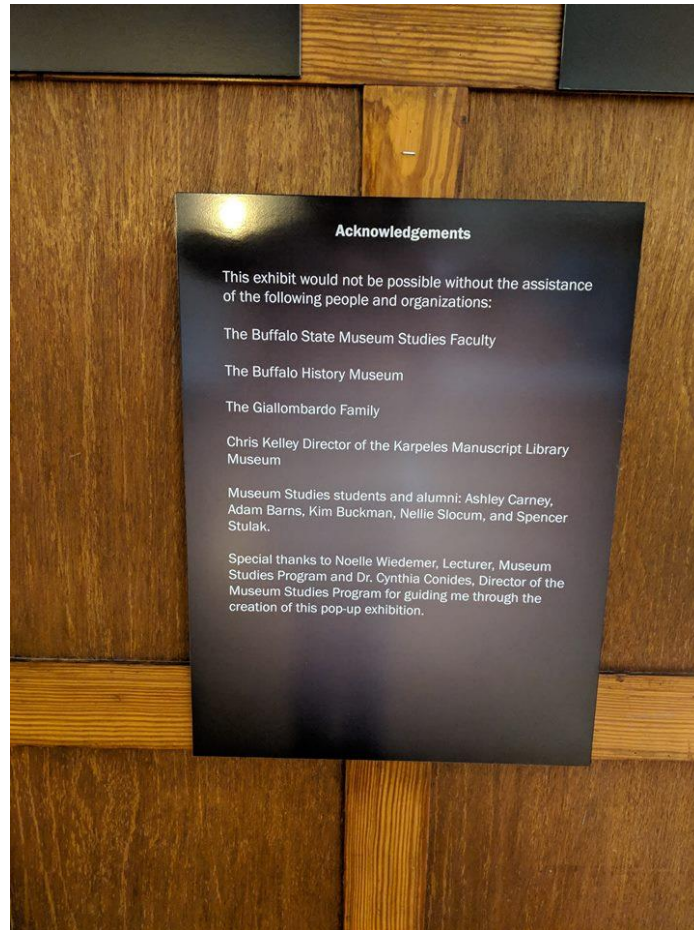


Figure 8. Acknowledgement panel for exhibit.





Figure 9. Picture of exhibit after installation.

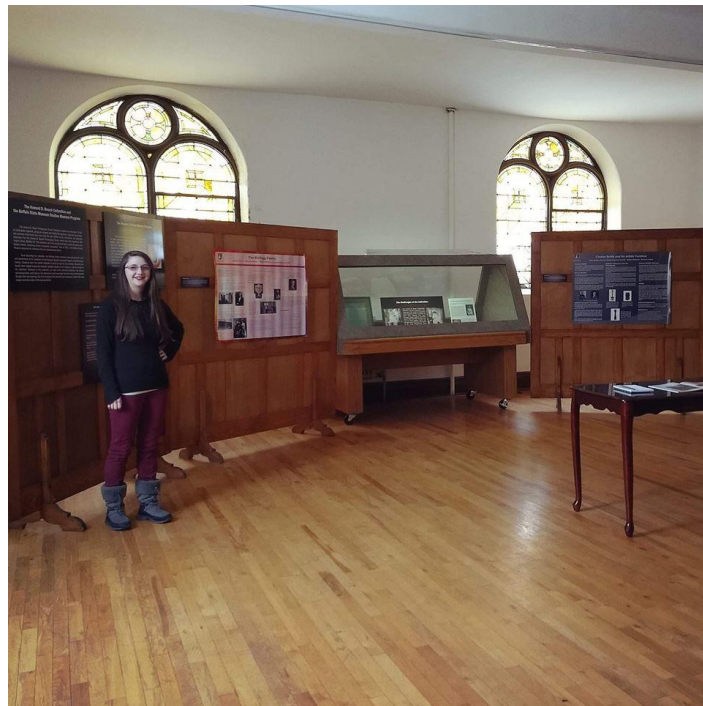


Figure 10. Mary Kwandras standing next to her pop-up exhibit.



Figure 11. Visitors enjoying the pop-up exhibit.