# Chapter 12
# Young People in a Gallery with a Digital Camera:
## Communicating Ideas, Inquiry, and Curiosity

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## ABSTRACT

*Digital technologies that serve to develop new ways of engaging with each other and promote learning are challenging how collaborations are formed and enacted in the educational setting. This chapter discusses a project set in Melbourne, Australia, that involved learning about what young people think about visiting a gallery as part of an education program. The twist to this project was placing a digital camera in each of the hands of Grade 3 to 6 primary school students. The investigation centered around seeing if it was possible to integrate digital cameras in a specifically designed gallery program that required students to generate digital still photographs to share their experiences. One of the aims for this approach was for the student voice to inform the gallery educators of what they were engaging with in the gallery space and to influence future program development. The digital camera itself challenged ways of working in the gallery space, as too did listening to young people's voice to inform learning and teaching as a part of the gallery education programs. Paramount to this project was seeing the transformation of K-12 education in the gallery setting particularly with the digital camera seen as a renewed or revisioned technology, that is, a technology that would not normally be utilized in the gallery space for educational programs. In building on the digital camera's familiar use in the primary school context, this project highlights the integration of this device as a hand-held mobile technology that supports the crossing of boundaries between school and gallery learning environments and that supports young people to be trusted, honored, and allowed to explore their own voice and choice.*

## INTRODUCTION

*Overall there was a sense of excitement that was born from youthful exuberance when presented with a new experience, open spaces and unknown potential. The group I observed taking photos was at the beginning fully preoccupied with the camera and how to photograph the art work - they were walking rapidly almost darting between the works and talking (some almost whispering) with each other on the way. Some led, some followed. As the students spread around the galleries they were focused on their task and not too concerned or distracted by other members of the public or the guards. There were lots of smiles, eyes wide open. (Taylor, gallery education staff member)*

Taylor's reflection shares the excitement, innovation and collaboration between gallery education staff, young people and teachers in a moment of learning about art. It highlights learning to listen to each other while sharing perspectives about meaning making. The digital camera is the digital tool at the center of this reflection. It is seen as a renewed digital technology integrated into the gallery space and transferred to the school and home environment. The digital camera is a technology that blurs the boundaries between these learning spaces. A technology that is at the center of children generating their own digital photographs to capture lived experiences; and one that assists to communicate their ideas, questions, inquiry and curiosity about art, artists, and the gallery space.

Digital technologies that serve to develop new ways of engaging with each other and promote learning are challenging how collaborations are formed and enacted in the K-12 educational environment. Most importantly the use and meaningful embedding of digital cameras, as hand held mobile devices, into the learning process for young people offers possibilities for innovative collaborations where all are valued as learners; no matter age, formal education, or role (Lemon, 2008). The digital camera is a device that can be easily used

with young people and offers them the opportunity to discover its use with scaffolding from another. This book chapter shares insights from a project between young people, a primary school, and the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) in Melbourne, Australia. The digital camera is seen as a digital technology to support learning from, for, and with all. This highlights collaboration as learning for all and where mutual respect of voice and different ways of seeing is valued. As Taylor's narrative shares, the excitement, trepidation, wonderings, different way of working and the empowerment of student voice and choice ignited a unique collaboration between young people and adults from the school and gallery. This chapter shares initial findings about the collaboration, in particular focus on the integration of the digital camera. Discussion features the agreements that were established during the collaboration to value all participants and to provide opportunities to honor voice and choice for students. Access and equity to digital cameras is also engaged with, as to the planning that supported this technology. Interspersed are visual narratives generated by the young people to support the discussion. The chapter culminates in guiding principles that emerged from this collaboration and offers others areas for consideration when working this way in a gallery space with digital technology.

This chapter does not intend to serve as an evaluation of young children's reactions and responses to various exhibitions in the gallery, rather it shares the insights the young people have shared themselves about being invited to use a digital camera. The practice of generating digital still photographs paired with word as reflection (visual narratives) demonstrates how supporting voice through this alternative reflective strategy is an inclusive and innovative practice. Juxtaposed against the student voice are the voices of the teacher and gallery education staff members. This is a way to contribute to the impact on assumptions of how young people can access technology to capture their gallery experiences and pedagogical

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