

A CASE STUDY OF PROVIDING OBJECT ITINERARIES AS PROVENANCE FOR
CULTURAL ARTIFACTS IN A MUSEUM

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of my study is to investigate how one museum in the Midwestern United States, the Oriental Institute, contextualizes its permanent collection of cultural artifacts in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery. Based on the information I collected, I suggest strategies for art educators to provide object itineraries as part of the provenance for artifacts in art museums and schools. To guide my research, I explore the following questions: What are the complex cultural histories behind the artifacts presented? How do curators and educators in the Oriental Institute describe the purpose and difficulties of providing object itineraries information in their exhibition? What are some strategies for educators to navigate the pedagogical and informational gap caused by the lack of chronological ownership stories? Such questions are increasingly important in a world where cultural appropriation is still a norm; meanwhile, misconceptions of how museums acquire their collections, especially non-western artifacts, are common.

I conducted my research using a qualitative, case study approach. I chose the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery from the Oriental Institute's permanent collection and observed how the museum contextualized the artifacts by not only providing basic provenance about the ownership, but also engaging aspects of cultural history and object itineraries. I conducted interviews to further investigate why the museum provides such information on their cultural artifacts as well as what are the challenges to present such information in public.

Through this research, I conclude the necessity of including object itineraries as part of the provenance information, and provide possible strategies for art educators to navigate the issues with provenance information in art museums. The strategies include going through archives and consulting with professionals to find in-depth information, working on the layout of

museum labels and take-away booklets to provide more inviting written information, as well as utilizing gallery tours, audio devices, and other related museum programs to offer learners chances to interact with the professionals and objects in multiple contexts.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The Ancient Greek physician Hippocrates once said, “Life is short, art endures.” This quote resonates with me and explains my interests in the artifacts in art museums. Museums are visual repositories of history, culture, and knowledge (Chung, 2009). Like a time capsule, the artifacts often remind people of a certain time and place.

In 2013, I worked as a teaching assistant with students from 4 to 10 years old at an art museum’s summer camps. One of my responsibilities was to accompany students to the Art Institute everyday to view a specific artwork. It was both funny and pleasing for me to see the little ones holding a rope, walking in a line in the museum, and could not help gazing around at the artworks even though we kept telling them to watch their steps. This is why I found art museums fascinating and powerful: no matter where the students came from, what age they were, or what language they spoke, they were more engaged when we were surrounded by the actual artworks and artifacts.

In these summer camps, I had a variety of international students from countries including Mexico, Cuba, China, Japan, and Germany. There was a 5-year-old student from Japan in one of the classes. He could only speak a few words in English and could not understand most of the lessons. The limited access to English and different classroom management rules made him perpetually insecure. Even though he always doodled great drawings in class, he did not understand or follow the instructions well. Thus, he was easily agitated and upset. One day, we had to pass by the Japanese art collection to reach the folk art gallery during class. When we passed by the Japanese Buddhist statue, the student from Japan suddenly pulled my hand, and said “Japan! Japan!” in an excited tone. His eyes lit up, and I had never seen him as happy as he

was at that moment. After I communicated his excitement to the instructor, I stayed behind with him and showed him more Japanese art at the museum. We could not communicate much, but I understood him as a child far away from his homeland. For him, it must have been exciting to see familiar culture and artwork in a foreign country. He apparently had a connection and interest in Japanese art. When we passed by a display window with Japanese traditional folk art, he pointed at the object and asked me: “How?” Based on my understanding, he was confused as to how these objects were here in the United States. I did not know how to answer his question, and could only show him around and then take him back to the classroom.

Similar occurrences happened again with a little girl from Mexico. I realized she had more interests in looking at the Tlatilco, a type of figure sculpture usually found in Central America. This curiosity to certain cultural artifacts from visitors, especially international visitors made me wonder about the cultural history behind these artifacts and the ways in which these objects are relocated.

Because of these moments with my students, I started to pay attention to the information around provenance at the museum. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, provenance is borrowed from French, combined with English elements. It often refers to “the history of the ownership of a work of art or an antique, used as a guide to authenticity or quality.” In terms of this definition of provenance, I can easily find information such as where the artifacts had been found, when they were created, and who made them on the labels in the Art Institute. However, it is often difficult to trace the history of ownership and the reasons of relocation, especially for non-western cultural artifacts. Mostly I saw ambiguous texts such as “From... collection”, “From ... Fund”, “Gift of the ...” or “anonymous donor”. For example, a lot of East Asian artwork is labeled as being from the “James and Mary Collection”. However, as an audience

member, I do not have any idea who James and Mary might be, where they received the artwork, or how these works ended up displayed in the Art Institute. Thus, the information around the artifacts is incomplete and inadequate. There is a huge gap of knowledge in between where the artifacts have been made or found and the museums where they end up.

Instances of misunderstanding and assumptions of cultural appropriation also increased my interests in exploring this in-between gap. I heard a story from my friend, who was an intern at the Oriental Institute a few years ago. The Oriental Institute is a world-renowned showcase for the history, art, and archaeology of the ancient Near East. The museum displays a wide range of objects from locations including ancient Egypt, Nubia, Persia, Syria, and the ancient site of Megiddo. One day my friend saw a note in the museum's guest review book. Very straightforward, the visitor wrote in an irritated tone and claimed that the museum should not display those objects that are looted from other countries. As a result, the curator of the Oriental Institute at the time, wrote an email to the visitor, and clarified that almost all objects at the museum's permanent galleries are recovered by Oriental Institute excavation teams. The archaeologists from the institute participated and contributed huge efforts to the excavation and preservation processes. She also mentioned that the institution only brings parts of the pieces and reliefs back to the U.S. for research and educational purposes. For example, the Oriental Institute archaeologists excavated a throne room courtyard in 1928-29 and only brought a lamassu, which is a human-headed winged bull, and some reliefs as part of the division of finds. The curator also suggested that other works in the Institute were purchased through legal approaches. This story of a visitor's misconception about the incomplete provenance of artifacts happened almost four years ago. I wondered how the museum might have made changes to alleviate this issue. In the winter of 2015, I visited the Oriental Institute Museum, and surprisingly, I saw relatively

thorough information about their artifacts. The labels described the process of how the objects had been excavated, as well as how those pieces have been relocated to the museum.

These lived experiences led me to believe that the narratives and histories behind the cultural artifacts are rich and worthy of study. I want to explore how the Oriental Institute displays a specific collection of cultural artifacts in its permanent collections, and what are some of the purposes and difficulties of providing thorough provenance information. I aim to suggest strategies for museum and art educators to properly utilize the culturally relevant history of acquirement to further audiences' learning.

1.2 Statement of the problem, Primary Research Question, and Supporting Sub-questions

Art museums can be considered controversial. To many people, they represent civilization, humanity, and diversity. To others, art museums also represent imperial conquest, unlawful acquisition, or recognition of select world cultures by provincial Western observers due to colonization (Hoffman, 2010). Meanwhile, most museums have a mission of educating through object-centered study. According to Helguera (2010), an object is a microcosm of a culture or an artwork; it is a window to the world of an artist (p. 3).

Curators and museum educators often try to introduce the artworks through labels, audio devices and gallery tours with docents. As a result, audiences learn from the provided information and have a general understanding of the artwork. However, in many instances the information on art museums' labels is inadequate based on my experience and observation. It tends to focus on the formalist standpoint and background of the artist, but excludes the nuanced tracing of historical ownership. Thus, audiences are uninformed and sometimes inquisitive about

the historical and cultural context behind the objects and how they came into the museum, especially for non-western artifacts.

My goal in this thesis is to examine how the cultural artifacts, especially non-western artifacts, are being represented in one select gallery of a museum in the Midwestern United States, the Oriental Institute. Cultural artifacts are human-made objects which generally reveal historical and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions (Chung, 2009). I closely studied the cultural artifacts in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery in the Oriental Institute. By observing the information illustrated on the label around the artifacts, listening to the stories museum docents told the audiences, and interviewing museum staff, I study the reasons and challenges of presenting provenance information and recognize the significance of the public engagement events related to this collection (e.g. museum lecture, workshop, film screening, etc.).

The primary research question of my study is: How do curators and educators in the Oriental Institute describe the purpose and difficulties of providing object itineraries as part of the provenance in their exhibition? I attempt to answer this question through observing how the Institute contextualizes its collection in one selected gallery, and provide more insight by interviewing curators and educators.

In order to critically analyze the artifacts and answer my primary research question, I ask several sub-questions to guide me through:

1. What are the complex cultural histories behind some of the artifacts in Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery?
2. In what ways does the Oriental Institute engage audience members to explore the provenance of its artifacts?

I suggest that if art museums highlight the thorough provenance by including a culturally relevant history of acquisition for artifacts, audiences will have a better and deeper understanding of the artworks. The purpose of my study therefore is to explore how museum educators and art teachers can embrace the complex cultural history behind artifacts to further facilitate and enhance international and domestic visitors' learning experiences.

1.3 Significance of the Study

My investigation of the representation of cultural artifacts within the Oriental Institute, in relationship to provenance and multicultural art education, is important for many reasons. First, cultural artifacts are valuable not only because of their economic value, but also because they are effectively teaching materials to enhance learning experiences (Chung, 2009). According to Chung (2009)

Cultural artifacts are human-made objects which generally reveal historic information about cultural values, beliefs, and traditions. Cultural artifacts are accessible to school children because they are concrete manifestations of artistic expression, cultural heritage, scientific discovery, and sociopolitical development; therefore, they can be effectively used to explain complex concepts, values, traditions, and ideas from various cultures to enhance learning experiences. (p. 33)

A contextual exploration of cultural artifacts can foster students and museum visitors' historical and multicultural understanding while helping them engage with visual culture.

Second, the intersection between provenance and cultural ownership, and the chronological gap between origin and museums are significantly pedagogical and informational. The trajectories of cultural artifacts have the potential to reveal the culturally relevant histories

that people rarely know, and some of the audience members have questions about these cultural ownerships and histories. It is noteworthy that more and more museums are starting to mention the objects' places of origin and ownership on their labels; however, there are often questions that are left unanswered. For example, I saw many Asian artifacts as labeled from the "Julia Collection" in the Art Institute; however, who is Julia? What is her collection? How did she start the collection? Why can we now view the work in the art museum context? It is not enough to only generally mention the most recent record of ownership around the piece of art, but it is also important to address more consistent and thorough context of provenance. I noticed that provenance information is often incomplete among the 20 categories of information that museums should strive to compile and make available around objects. The categories include but are not limited to: known owners, dates of ownership, places of ownership, and methods of transfer (sale, gift, descent, etc.), (Wechsler& Ledbetter, 2004). I suggest that knowing a culturally relevant history of artifacts is increasingly important in a world where cultural appropriation is still the norm, and particularly where misunderstandings and assumptions of how museums compile their collections, especially of non-western artifacts, is common.

Because of this, it is important to understand how museums present provenance and cultural ownership in their collections. While many scholars, for example, Chung (2003, 2009), Feigenbaum (2012), and Joyce (2012) have taken up the basic and general concepts and problems of provenance in relationship to cultural artifacts and museum education, there is little research exploring the aspects of object itineraries as provenance information in relation to art education. Specifically, the types of provenance that more than trace ownership, but also engage elements of cultural history, and investigate methods of facilitating international and domestic

visitors' thinking and learning of cultural artifacts in an art context. My study works to provide insight into such questions.

Beyond the significance of cultural artifacts and provenance in relation to education, there is also personal significance to this study. Grown up in Nanjing, China, I found myself tremendously amazed by the Chinese traditional calligraphies and paintings during museum field trips. There is usually a variety of colophons and seals on the end of the long hand scrolls. These marks were made by either the artists or the collectors, to record and prove who once owned the work. For me the history and stories that an artwork carries is not only associated with its creator – the artist – but also the persons who once owned the object.

I am also extremely interested in the hidden histories and invisible narratives embedded in cultural properties also because of the lack of access to a full narrative of artifacts in China. China has had a long colonial history in the modern era; as a result, tons of artifacts were looted and removed from the country, and there are fewer opportunities to view artworks from other countries based on my experience. China also went through the Cultural Revolution from the 1960s to 1970s that negatively affected its cultural heritages. The Cultural Revolution was a national movement that generated from inside the government and aimed to devalue and devastate every cultural artifact from history, in the name of “getting rid of bad traditions”. Such events that focus on erasing and removing all the history and traditions underscored the importance of being able to teach people how to embrace and utilize complex histories to ensure students and museum visitors know the history and cultural background of artifacts. It is significant for me to learn the historical and contextual information behind cultural artifacts to avoid committing the same error, and to foster critical thinking.

As historical human-made objects, cultural artifacts are significant in different types of museums. Whether at an art museum, a history museum, a science museum or an archeology museum, we encounter cultural artifacts in many locations. Therefore, I firmly believe that it is necessary to explore cultural artifacts' itineraries as part of their provenance to enrich multicultural studies.

1.4 Summary and Design of the Study

My intention to probe how one museum contextualizes and presents provenance information stems from my experiences working in an art museum's summer camps. I realized that art museums in the United States often provide the origin and the most recent ownership information around their acquisition; however, the chronological ownership stories in-between are often missing. I believe this gap is informational and educational, and often contains history, culture, and stories that will help visitors gain a better understanding of the objects and artworks.

The following chapter will present the definition of provenance, the prior studies of provenance in art-related contexts, as well as object itineraries in relation to provenance and museum education. These related works will build the foundation for understanding the significance of the chronological ownership stories as a missing part of pedagogical practice.

CHAPTER 2. RELATED WORK

The primary research question of my study is to investigate how cultural artifacts' itineraries as part of the provenance can fit into art education. To explore this question, I discuss the definition and prior studies of provenance in art-related contexts, the history of multicultural art education, the concept of object itineraries, and the narratives of object itineraries as an effective pedagogical tool in literature. I aim to review the related work to learn the concepts throughout my research, and suggest the significance of a more thorough study on cultural artifacts' itineraries.

2.1 Definition of Provenance

The definition of provenance, according to *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary 11th edition*, is “the history of ownership of a valued object or work of art or literature”. It was first known to be used in 1785 and traced from the French verb *provenir*, meaning, “to come forth”. The dictionary provides a rather general idea of provenance; however, the word implies multiple foci depending on various academic contexts. For example, it refers to the changing ownerships in art-historical practice, while emphasis is on a fixed point from an archeological perspective. It is not a fixed idea, but rather, an evolving subject. Feigenbaum and Reist (2012) stated that “Provenance is neither stable as a concept nor constant as an instrument” (p. 1). In this section, I explain the definition of provenance in different disciplines, but focus on the meanings of provenance in art-related contexts.

In art-historical practice, provenance refers to “the chain of ownership, ideally beginning with the creation of the object” (Joyce, 2012, p. 49). Art historians originally tended to believe that it's their primary mission to discover the object's origin (Feigenbaum & Reist, 2012). Later

on, they realized that the chain of ownership, the physical components, as well as the prioritizing aesthetics of the object establish its overall significance and value in the society and the field of art history (DeAugustine, 2011; Higonnet, 2012). According to Feigenbaum and Reist (2012), “an account of a work’s subsequent ownership was deemed useful mainly to establish a chain reaching back to the moment of creation and thereby provide evidence to help substantiate authenticity or attribution” (p. 1). Thus, the provenance plays an important role in establishing the artwork’s original context and supporting its authenticity.

“Provenance examines where an object moves, and to whom, overtime” (Higonnet, 2012, p.200). Therefore, it has a huge impact on objects’ exchange values in art markets. For dealers and collectors, the value of art has always depended on the ever-changing relationships between objects, wealth, location, and knowledge (Higonnet, 2012). Provenance, as a history of exchange ownerships, records the artifact’s journey from where it has been made or found, to other owners in history (Horwood, 2015). According to Higonnet (2012), ownership represents wealth as well as an individual’s socio-historical position.

Ownership expresses energy of wealth, in all its myriad, and historically changeable, forms. Ownership also mobilizes expertise and the rhetorical articulation of expertise. Ownership controls the conditions according to which an object is seen; collection and display determine how we perceive art visually– in relation to other objects, in relation to institutional or personal space, and in relation to ourselves. (p. 200)

Hence, provenance as a record of exchange history produces and represents value. Likely, the lack of provenance creates skepticism and decreases objects’ value in art markets. “If there is a gap in that chain during which time they don’t know who owned a particular object for decade or century, there is a possibility that the object was forged” (Hirst, 2016, para. 3).

Archaeologists often use *provenience*, a synonym for *provenance* (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 11th edition) to describe a similar but distinguished subject. Compared to art historians, who often focus on the "itinerary that an object follows as it moves from hand to hand" (Joyce, 2012, p. 48), archaeologists put emphasis on a fixed point – the excavation and in-situ find site (DeAugustine, 2011). Archaeologists aim to precisely describe *provenience* as a three-dimensional location in space (Joyce, 2012). The accurate location – the artifact's birthplace and original community, is the key in archaeological context.

My study will take account of *provenance* in museum settings, and primarily from art historians and archaeologists' perspectives. Hirst (2016) used an example of a silver denarius, one of an estimated 22.5 million Roman coins minted for Julius Caesar between 49-45 BC, to delineate the differences and similarities between art historians and archaeologists when they consider *provenance*:

"It's a Roman coin, what else do we need to know?" says an art historian; "The shipping trade in Roman era Mediterranean Sea," says an archaeologist. It all comes down to a question of context. Because *provenance* for an art historian is important to establish ownership, but *provenance* is interesting to an archaeologist to establish meaning. (Hirst, 2016, para. 12)

Feigenbaum and Reist (2012) stated the significance of *provenance* for experts in the art field in a broader sense, including anyone who work to transfer art:

Provenance research has been left to the experts in the art market and to the advisers, collectors, and curators who actively play a role in the transfer of art from one owner to another... A work's *provenance* might be mined for clues that contribute to fundamental art-historical knowledge. For example, *provenance* might reveal that a panel painting in

one museum was once in the same collection as one in another museum, and prompt research to discover whether both were once part of the same dismantled polyptych (p. 1).

In this sub-section, I introduced the definition of provenance from art historians' and archeologists' perspectives. In the following section, I summarize the prior studies of cultural artifacts' provenance to better understand the significance and history of this topic.

2.2 Prior Studies of Cultural Artifacts' Provenance

Prior studies of cultural artifacts' provenance mainly focused on three aspects. First was the clarification and significance of displaying provenance in public. Feigenbaum (2012) and Hong (2012) both discussed provenance based on the physical signs and seals on the artworks, and how history of ownership influences the meaning and value of art. Joyce's (2012) essay *From Place to Place: Provenience, Provenance and Archaeology* clarified provenance by explaining the word in different academic contexts. "Archaeologists usually understand provenience to be the original findspot of an object. In contrast, the provenance of the same object is normally defined by art historians as its chain of ownership" (p. 48). Chung (2003, 2009) published two articles in *Art Education* to illustrate the challenges of showcasing cultural artifacts in art museums. For example, one misconception is assuming that cultural artifacts in art museums are just artworks for aesthetic appreciation, while neglecting their cultural and historical context. To rectify this, Chung focuses on the importance of presenting the cultural artifacts' contextual stories for maximizing visitors' learning.

Second, prior studies address provenance in relation to the issue of authenticity and the artifacts' exchange values in auctions. For example, Horwood (2015) discussed provenance as one of the key issues for collectors in *DePaul Business and Commercial Law Journal*. He

defined provenance as “the chain of ownership” (p. 498), specifically, how was it originally created and who bought it initially. He suggested it’s “incredibly important to test provenance” (p. 499) because it’s directly affecting the exchange value in the art market.

Lastly, prior studies discussed the interrogation of illicit trading, and who is the rightful owner of the piece. Specifically, the problem of incomplete and missing provenance information, which mostly focused on cultural heritage and the extensive artworks looted from the Nazi- Era (Gill & Chippindale, 1993; DeAugustine, 2011). For example, in Gill and Chippindale’s (1993) article *The Material and Intellectual Consequences of Esteem for Cycladic Figures*, they highlighted how site looting has an impact on the authenticity of the materials since 90% of all known Cyclasdia figures have no attributable provenance. Nicholas’s (1994) book *The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Europe’s Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War* addressed how Nazis looted thousands of art works and other valuable objects during World War II from public and private collections of Belgium, Holland, France, Poland, and Italy. Similarly, Elia (2001) showed that over 88% of the 13,631 known Apulian vases (originally from southern Italy) in circulation did not have a documented provenance in his *Analysis of the Looting, Selling, and Collecting of Apulian Red-figure Vases*. Based on these facts and data, Wechsler (2001), as well as Wechsler and Ledbetter (2004), illustrated the museum policies and procedures of showcasing Nazi-Era objects. In *The Nazi-Era Provenance Internet Portal: collaboration creates a new tool for museums and researchers*, Wechsler and Ledbetter (2004) addressed the issue from a historical angle, and provided insight into possible solutions to deal with the problem. For example, museums should put effort into identifying objects with incomplete or uncertain provenance between 1932 and 1946 in their collections, and make Nazi-Era

provenance information accessible by using on-line resources and cooperating with other museums.

Previous studies of provenance in art-related contexts mainly focus on three topics: the definition and presentation of provenance at museums, provenance and its exchange value in the art market, and the illicit and ethical issues behind provenance. Despite a strong connection between provenance and cultural artifacts, as well as museum studies, there is a lack of scholarly literature reflecting the role of provenance in multicultural art education. In the following subsection, I review the history and definition of multicultural education within the discipline of art education in the United States in order to establish a foundation for further discussion about object itineraries.

2.3 A Brief History of Multicultural Art Education

Like the name implies, *multicultural* education focuses on diverse cultures. *Culture* is made up of what we do, and what we value (Daniel, 1997; Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001). It is defined as “the ideas, customs, skills, arts, etc. of given people in a given period of time” (Chanda, 2008, p. 115). Culture is ever-changing and immersed in everyone’s daily life. A multicultural education should therefore focus on diverse cultures of different people at different time periods.

Multicultural education was originated and shaped during the Civil Right Movement in the 1960s. Because of the non-static nature of culture, multicultural education is evolving from time to time. The goals are to combat racism, to understand the complexity of different cultures, and to provide social justice and equitable opportunities for individuals and groups. Chanda (2008) suggested the striving to maintain individuality of cultures in America shifted the emphasis of

multicultural education. “This paradigmatic shift redirected the educational emphasis in multicultural education from things that make people alike to those that make people different” (p. 113).

Art as a large part of culture plays an important role in sharing diverse cultural values. Erickson (1995) provides an example of one of her sixth grader’s responses to a Chinese painting from the Song Dynasty by Fan Kuan after he learned of Asian philosophies. “They thought nature was more important than man” (p. 35). This implies that art works and art education has the power to reflect and pass on diverse philosophies and ideologies. According to Adejumo (2002), the major goal of multicultural art education is to “expand students’ understanding of history and cultural traditions of minority groups in the United States. Informed knowledge about these cultures is expected to generate better appreciation and tolerance of difference” (p. 34). Stuhr (1994) and Chanda (2008) also indicated that multicultural art education should be an instrument of school to extend students’ understanding of minority groups’ histories, cultures, and traditions.

Cultural artifacts are human-made objects that represent diverse values and traditions. Because they are concrete and often readily in the United States, they have been increasingly important in multicultural art education.

A cultural artifact is easily accessible to students because it is a concrete, observable manifestation of a cultural belief, scientific breakthrough, or aesthetic accomplishment of an examined culture, as opposed to a piece of abstract information. Therefore, educators can use cultural objects to explain aesthetic expressions, complex concepts, values, traditions, and ideas from various cultures; these objects can be used to support a substantial learning experience. (Chung, 2003, p. 13)

Chung (2003, 2009) has also suggested multiple challenges for presenting cultural artifacts in a museum setting; specifically, the question of how to present cultural objects to reveal their contextual significance. In his article, Chung (2003) documents an art museum that merely focuses on the aesthetic construct of a Ming dynasty painting, but overlooks the “Asian belief that nature and humans are a co-existing entity” (p. 17). Another challenge according to Chung is deciding whether cultural artifacts in art museums should all be considered “art”. He gave another example of a mask only be considered as a work of art after it was displayed at the African Art Gallery. I believe more work needs to be done to examine what the specific contexts are that educators should present when they introduce a cultural artifact, and what educators in school settings can do to avoid misrepresenting cultural artifacts. I propose that one way educators can attempt to avoid misrepresenting cultural artifacts’ meanings and significance is by researching and then providing objects’ itineraries, which I discuss below.

2.4 Object Itineraries

In the first sub-section, I introduced the distinctive meanings of provenance in different contexts. The distinction can be described as “a fixed point” versus “an itinerary that an object follows as it moves from hand to hand” (Joyce, 2012, p. 48). For example, archaeologists pay more attention to the artifact’s birthplace, and art historians are more interested in an artifact’s resume metaphorically. Both definitions only cover part of the dynamic itinerary of an object. “In some sense, they fail to discriminate usefully how objects pass in and out of meaningfulness” (Joyce, 2012, p. 58). I am interested in provenance not only as “the facts of ownership and transfer”, but also “to explore ideas and narratives about the origins and itineraries of objects,

consider the historical uses of provenance information, and draw attention to the transformative power of ownership” (Feigenbaum & Reist, 2012, p. 1).

Walter Benjamin (1923) once said: “The most distinguished trait of a collection will always be its transmissibility” (p. 66). The concept of “object biographies” was first addressed in Gosden and Marshall (1999)’s *The Cultural Biography of Objects*. “Objects are understood to accumulate biographies as they repeatedly move between people” (p. 174). Later, Joyce (2012) used the term “object itineraries” as a modification of “object biographies” to further identify the distinctions of tracing an object from place to place in different disciplines. “Objects move from place to place before they reach their archaeological findspot, and they continue in motion from the moment they are archaeologically recovered,” (p. 55). Object itineraries are the combination of provenance and provenience, which both refer to “places in a series of chronologically arranged spatial location” (Joyce, 2012, p. 55). Whether viewed from the art historian’s or the archaeologist’s standpoint, it only represents part of the object’s itinerary as it moved from place to place. Thus, literature suggests object itineraries provide a framework to consider the biography of the object more broadly, including the dynamic chronological locations and ownerships (Joyce, 2012).

So far I’ve reviewed the definition and prior studies of provenance, the brief history of multicultural art education, and the concept of object itineraries. In the following section, I give a summary of a literature that utilizes the narratives of object itineraries as a powerful tool to facilitate learning.

2.5 Narrative of Object Itineraries in Museum Education

Helguera's (2010) book *What in the world: a museum's subjective biography* unfolded a number of stories of the artifacts' crucial histories – not of their makers but of those who brought them to the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Helguera is an artist, author, and educator who has more than twenty years' experience of working in the education department of art museums. Throughout the years, he has become interested in the biographical anecdotes, oral histories and archives of nearly forgotten stories. He focuses on the narratives that were “seldom visible or communicated to the public”; and the stories “about the generations of collectors, directors, curators, and educators whose vision and interests have shaped the nature and tone of the institutions and their collections” (p. 3). Helguera illustrated stories about Maxwell Sommerville in the second Chapter of the book – *Maxwell Sommerville, Glyptopogist*. Sommerville was an explorer, collector, and distinguished academic. He believed that engraved gems were an important representation of history and culture, and he created a field of knowledge – glyptology. Sommerville died in 1904, and left his collection to the museum. According to Helguera (2012), a newspaper article praised Sommerville as “one of the largest and most important representatives of glyptic art in America” (p. 35). However, the authenticity of his collection, including gems and other artifacts, has been questioned. Even the prized stone, Triumph of Constantine, was alleged to be a forged one. Sommerville had provided a detailed provenance including a previous history of this item, as well as when and where he had received this object.

Amongst the most important and interesting antique gems in my collection is one engraved when Constantine held the Roman Empire in Bizantia, which came into the possession of the Court of Russia. The Empress Catherine II, wishing to confer a great favor and special regard on an ambassador to her court, from her remarkable collection in

the Museum of the Hermitage at St. Petersburg, presented this antique gem to him in 1785. Twenty-five years afterwards, at his death in Greece, it was sold, and was piously guarded during thirty years by a collector in the Hellenic peninsula. After that it became the property of Bieler in Styria. I came into possession of this remarkable gem after more than five years of negotiations with its owner, and subsequently with his heirs.

(Sommerville, as quoted in Helguera, 2012, p. 36)

Despite Sommerville giving a good example of providing thorough object itineraries, it has been proved that the genuine “‘Triumph of Constantine’ reposes in the Imperial Museum of Vienna” (Helguera, 2012, p. 340). In fact, Sommerville had purchased one of several eighteenth-century fakes designed after a famous relief depicting Titus, not Constantine. This controversial story of whether the collection is genuine or fake shows how Sommerville obtained his collection, and how a single object’s itinerary can reveal details and the collector’s passion for other times and cultures. This book also contains stories of other cultural artifacts from Nippur, China, Mexico, etc., and illustrated stories of many other collectors, explorers, and curators.

Helguera (2010) attempted to show the subjective biography of a University Museum and of himself by selecting a group of objects, telling stories of their itineraries, as well as of related collectors and curators. His prolific experience of working at an art museum, and interactions with the curator, collectors, and living artists helped him come to realize that the collectors or curators can transform the meaning and value of objects and collections dramatically based on the contextual information, and the stories that they choose to tell (p. 122).

The modalities of object interpretation—formal analysis, theoretical discussion, or simple biographical/anecdotal storytelling about the object or its author—are all hermeneutic

tools that produce valuable and necessary appreciation but never a definitive reading, simply because the nature of interpretation is that very shift of perceptions that affect meaning—the ever-evolving “fusion of horizons” as described by Gadamer. (p. 120)

This excerpt provided a summary of elements that have an impact on object interpretation, including formal analysis, theoretical discussion, and biographical storytelling around the object. Because the viewers have the right to interpret a work of art based on their perceptions, as a result, their different interpretations create different values around that piece.

What in the world: a museum's subjective biography addressed the significance of cultural artifacts from both art historians' and archeologists' perspectives; it also discussed the relationship between objects' study and museum education; further, it used actual examples and stories that highlighted the concept of object itineraries, and how narratives of object itineraries impact the authenticity as well as the meanings and values of objects.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed concepts that I use throughout my research, including the definition of provenance, multicultural education, and object itineraries in art-related contexts. In addition, I reviewed the prior studies that related to issues of cultural artifacts' provenance. Lastly, I reviewed Helguera's (2010) book *What in the world: a museum's subjective biography*, and suggested how he used the narrative of object itineraries in a University museum. In doing this, I showed the relationship between provenance and objects' itineraries, as well as cultural artifacts and multicultural art education. In the next chapter, I articulate the methodology and methods of my research in order to present the case study in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

In this study, I used a qualitative research methodology, specifically, through a case study approach to investigate my primary research question. The aim of my thesis is to study and describe how one museum engages with cultural artifacts' provenance information. By doing that, I intended to better understand the importance of presenting object itineraries as part of the provenance information, and the strategies of incorporating such information in other museums and educational settings. Thus, my goal fits into the purpose of qualitative research design: "understanding the process by which events and actions take place" as well as "developing causal explanations" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 19).

In order to understand a situation in a specific context in-depth, I chose to focus on a particular research site. I conducted a descriptive single-case study (Yin, 2009) to explore my primary research question: How do curators and educators in the Oriental Institute describe the purpose and difficulties of providing the object itineraries as part of provenance in their exhibition? In order to answer this question and suggest strategies for educators to navigate the provenance behind cultural artifacts, I collected data from the Oriental Institute by employing two methods: interview and observation. I interviewed one curator and two museum educators, and used a content analysis approach to categorize their experiences and insights into four sections: personal background and roles in the museum, understanding of provenance, purpose and difficulties of showcasing object itineraries as provenance in exhibitions, and strategies of better presenting such information. I also closely observed the cultural artifacts in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery from the Oriental Institute's permanent collection and provide a thorough description of how the museum contextualized their cultural artifacts in Chapter 4. I

documented what information was listed on the label around the artifacts, what stories museum docents told the audiences, and what other public engagement events related to this collection were provided by the museum.

3.2 Descriptive Single-Case Study

According to Yin (2009), the choice of research methods largely depends on the research question(s). In terms of case study, it is the most relevant method when researchers have little control over events, and try to answer research questions such as “how” or “why” a certain social phenomenon works in contemporary circumstances. A researcher would choose the case study method when the need is to understand “a real-life phenomenon in depth, but such understanding encompassed important contextual conditions” (p. 18). In my study, the real-life phenomenon that contained contextual conditions is how the Oriental Institute presents relatively thorough provenance information by incorporating object itinerates in a museum context.

To answer my research questions, I engaged in an in-depth observation and various interviews about one selected gallery in the Oriental Institute, and presented rich description of my data collection in Chapter 4. The action of taking an instance and using multiple methods and data sources to study and interrogate this example, also fits into case study method (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011).

The goal of my study is to investigate one sample, the Oriental Institute, and provide thorough description of patterns and connections from the data collection. Because of this, my research design would be further categorized as a descriptive case study. Like the name implies, descriptive case study aims to assess a sample in detail and in depth (Tobin, 2012), and emphasis is on describing “an intervention and the real-life context in which it occurred” (p. 20).

According to Tobin (2012), “descriptive case studies seek to reveal patterns and connections, in relation to theoretical constructs, in order to advance theory development,” (p. 2). I present the in-depth descriptive data in Chapter 4, and then discuss and develop conclusions in Chapter 5.

3.3 Methods for Data Collection

Spradley (1979) stated that “word” and “action” are two things that researchers study to effectively understand the world from the subject’s perspective. Therefore, in order to learn the conditions of presenting provenance information, as well as the curator’s and educators’ views on the significance and difficulties of presenting provenance in museums, I engaged two methods for collecting data around the cultural artifacts in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery: observation and interview.

I conducted interviews to engage museum staff’s reflections on their own lived experiences related to my research questions. I conducted three semi-structured interviews, and each lasted between thirty to sixty minutes. A semi-structured interview allows me to lead the interview, but also gives space for both participants and researchers to probe into areas that arise based on the conversation (Hatch, 2002). The questions were listed in four categories and were sent to the interviewees beforehand; however, some questions did not apply to every participant, and some participants’ answers led to different follow-up questions during interview interactions. The four categories are: personal background and role in the museum, understanding of provenance, purpose and difficulties of showcasing provenance information behind cultural artifacts, and strategies of better presenting such information. I started each interview with questions leaning towards their personal background and roles in the museum, as well their understanding of provenance behind the selected collection. For example, I asked, what is your

role as a museum staff member? Where are the cultural artifacts in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery originally from based on your professional knowledge? The questions included, but were not limited to:

- Has the complex provenance information, especially the culturally relevant history, such as how the museum acquired this cultural artifact, and the stories that happened before it was displayed in the museum, been shared with the visitors?
- If so, what are the specific approaches for sharing such information?
- Is the museum always showcasing such information? Were there any misunderstandings or questions from the visitors over the years regarding the information included/excluded?
- Were there any difficulties in collecting the history and stories behind the objects?
- Are there any challenges in presenting the knowledge to the public?
- If so, how does the museum overcome the problems?
- What are your aims in displaying the cultural artifacts and the provenance information?
- What would you suggest for educators and teachers to navigate the educational and information gap caused by the lack of chronological ownership stories?
- What would you suggest for art museum curators or educators when presenting cultural artifacts?

Through interviewing, I was interested in gathering information about specific examples, stories and strategies of how curators and art educators work in the Oriental Institute. All the interviews were audio recorded with permission from interviewees. I also took notes during interviews,

being prepared in case the recording device failed to record the information, and to remind myself about important information that can't record by audio, such as body language.

Additionally, I used observation as a method of collecting information. It involves watching and/or listening to people and events, then recording what has been discovered (Thomas & Brubaker, 2008). For this study, I went to the research site multiple times to observe how the museum presented the cultural artifacts through information on labels and panels. I also participated in a gallery tour led by certificated museum docents. I audiotaped the tour and took note of several questions, such as:

- How were the artifacts displayed?
- What information was illustrated on the labels around the artifacts?
- How did museum docents engage audiences to understand the pieces?
- What narratives related to object itineraries were presented during the gallery tour?
- What other activities or resources were provided?

I gathered this information to understand how the Oriental Institute presents the object itineraries as part of provenance information through action and participation.

Through collecting data, I gained a better understanding of how this institute was able to navigate a thorough provenance – providing information not only focused on tracing the ownership, but also a culturally relevant history, around their cultural artifacts. The combination of interviews and observation provided me multiple perceptions (Stake, 1994). Conducting interviews allowed me to learn different perspectives and correct the assumptions and misunderstandings that may have formed from my life experiences and observations. Participant observation gave me a visual representation and actual experience of learning adequate

knowledge behind the cultural artifacts. In addition, the observation experience provided a chance to examine the information I collected from the interviews.

3.4 Research Site

I used a purposive sampling approach to study the provenance around cultural artifacts in the museum settings and eventually choose the Oriental Institute to investigate. A purposive sampling approach focuses on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, which will best enable me to answer my research questions. I selected my site by first establishing essential criteria and then finding a site that fit those criteria (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

First, it was important that the museum presents historical non-western cultural artifacts rather than modern or contemporary American artworks. I am interested in exploring the history of relocation behind the human-made objects, and how the museum contextualizes the object itineraries. Thus, it is significant for me to choose a museum presenting non-western cultural artifacts. Second, I aimed to find a museum presenting cultural artifacts with abundant provenance information – including the origin and most recent ownership, and clear information about known owners, dates of ownership, places of ownership, methods of transfer (sale, gift, descent, etc.), sale price, and buyer, etc. (Wechsler& Ledbetter, 2004). The site should be a good example of how museums can navigate the thorough provenance information to enrich visitors' knowledge and understanding. Lastly, I needed to ensure that the curators and educators in the museum would be willing to participate in my research and interviews. Ideally, I would be able to go to the site multiple times to observe the collection and interview the professionals in person.

I was initially interested in the Oriental Institute after I heard a counter-narrative story about a visitor who got upset when attending the museum because of the lack of provenance

information. The Oriental Institute is a part of the University of Chicago, and has a profound institutional history within the city. The institute self-described as “an interdisciplinary research center that integrates archaeological, textual, linguistic, and art historical data to understand the development and functioning of the ancient civilizations of the Near East from the earliest Holocene through the Medieval period” (<https://oi.uchicago.edu/about/oriental-institute-museum>). During my visitation in the winter of 2015, I noticed that the Oriental Institute had been renovated, and was now thoroughly displaying and providing provenance information around their cultural artifacts. The museum also provides a great number of public engagement events, including lectures, gallery tours, and workshops such as “Ground to Gallery: The Secret Life of Museum Objects.” Upon initial investigation, visitation, and communication between museum professionals, I deemed that the Oriental Institute fit both my primary and secondary criteria, and decided to do my research at this site.

3.5 Participants

Participants for my study were chosen based on their direct involvement in the exhibition and public programs, as well as their availability and interest in my research. I chose to reach out to the professionals associated with the exhibition in terms of curating and educating. I engaged a snowball method, which allows me to increasingly gather potential participants from one to another. First, I contacted my friend who used to intern in the Oriental Institute, and she introduced me to one of the curators in the museum. After talking to the curator, she introduced two other museum educators who are frequently involved in designing public educational programs that are relevant for my study.

The perspectives and responses from museum visitors are highly important and relevant; however, due to the limitations of time, I chose to exclude their voices in this study. In addition, I did not include professionals' voices from other museums and institutions; for example, curators and educators in art museums or art programs. This limitation created a relatively narrow point of view; however, it helped me focus on the collections in one gallery. By focusing on the objects that are aesthetically attractive and historically important, this study provided useful information that can apply to other art museums and art education practitioners.

I collected the data from the fall of 2016 and concluded in early winter of 2017. First, I contacted the curator (introduced to me by my friend) to inquire about the possibility of conducting a case study in the Oriental Institute. She showed her interest and kindly introduced me to three other educators who also work at the Oriental Institute. I then contacted all recommended participants through email. I received responses from two of the educators. Thus, the participants who eventually joined my research included one curator who is currently researching and designing exhibitions, and two educators participating closely in designing public educational programs for the museum. Below is the general background information about each participant, and more information can be found in Chapter 4:

- Emma: Emma has been working at the Oriental Institute as a curator and research associate for over two decades. She is an Egyptologist, the coordinator of special exhibits at the Oriental Institute, and the editor of exhibit catalogs. She was very interested in this research topic and thinks the stories related to provenance are precious and worth sharing.
- Lily: Lily is a museum educator in charge of the youth and family programming. She has been working at the Oriental Institute for almost a year. With various previous experiences of working in different types of museums, she believes that museum education can create

and facilitate educational experiences by integrating science into different disciplines, such as history and art. She told me that she has limited experience and knowledge of details for discussing the specific collections that I selected. Her interests are to reveal the process and science of excavation, observation, and conservation.

- Margarita: Margarita was a Doctoral degree student when she worked at the Oriental Institute's Public Education Department. She participated and designed lessons for "Ground To Gallery: The Secret Life of Museum Objects" in 2014. This program focused on specific cultural artifacts' journeys from where they had been found, and how they ended up in Chicago's Oriental Institute.
- Museum docents: There are four museum docents involved in the gallery tour that I observed. They are an elite group of individuals who have been certified after an eight-week training program, and give at least thirteen gallery tours every year. They have passion and knowledge for delivering accurate historical information related to the objects.

All the participants were informed of my research intent and agreed to be part of my thesis research. I offered a consent form (See Appendix B) and gave them time to examine and sign the form prior to the interviews and observation. All participants' names were kept confidential with the use of pseudonyms due to ethical considerations. Institution's names and information were truthful for the purpose of study. The consent form explained the purpose of the research study, the confidentiality of participants' personal information, the method of collecting data, as well as the right to withdraw at any time without questions.

3.6 Data Analysis

To analyze the data and answer the research questions, I used content analysis to categorize my data collection. Generally, content analysis is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 24). It is also an approach to systematically and objectively find patterns of messages (Holsti, 1968). There are various approaches to content analysis, including word counts (statistical analyses), interpretive content analysis, and qualitative content analysis (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). For my case study, I used an interpretive content analysis, focused on narratively describing the meaning of communications in specific contexts (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). The combination of thematic description and analysis helped to investigate and represent the single-case of the Oriental Institute.

I used free software called ExpressScribe to assist transcribing all the conversations into a Word document. Because I used a semi-structured method, the questions and the sequence of the questions varied from person to person. I printed out the transcripts and used different colored markers to highlight useful information. This way of coding help me read and manage the data better and faster. I then divided the interview data into four different categories, similar to what I used to organize the interview questions: the background and role in the museum, the provenance and showcasing, the purpose and difficulties, and the strategies. The observational data can be categorized into three sections: the purpose of the gallery tour, the description of the gallery, and the conversation related to object itinerates as provenance information. Each participant’s interview and my personal observation of the gallery tour are presented in Chapter 4.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

I intended to provide a holistic description of possible reasons and methods that the Oriental Institute incorporates provenance information for contextualizing their collection, as well as effective strategies to help educators and teachers in art museums and other teaching contexts. However, there are multiple limitations in this study.

First, I have only interviewed museum staff from one archeology museum. The primary research problem is inspired by my experience of teaching students in an art museum. The perspectives and voices from art educators are valuable in understanding the situation. However, I chose a university museum that focuses on ancient Near Eastern studies to conduct interviews and observations. This limited my gathering of information from a broader context of different types of museums. Further, museum visitors' perspectives and responses were not taken into account. This excludes how the audiences feel about learning such stories and information related to the museum's acquisition and limited my understanding of the influence on delivering such information.

Second, I was only able to observe one gallery tour due to limited time. The museum provides various types of gallery tours with different foci. The one that I attended had an emphasis on multisensory experiences and materials of the artifacts. There are other public events, such as lectures, films, and workshops that focus on different aspects of the collection. Those events are designed for different groups of people including scholars, students, the elderly, and children. This limited me to describe and compare the gallery tour that I attended to what might happen in other related events.

In this chapter, I introduced the methodology and methods to conduct my research. I then presented information about my research site and participants, as well as how and why I chose

my subjects for this study. In the next chapter, I present rich descriptive interviews with the three participants, and one observation of gallery tour with museum docents.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

To conduct my research, I interviewed three museum staff members, a curator and two educators; I also observed one gallery tour led by a group of certified museum docents. In this chapter, I present data collection in three categories: curator, educators, and docent. In 4.1 and 4.2, I describe Emma, Lily and Margarita's backgrounds and roles in the museum, their understanding of provenance and cultural artifacts, as well as their purpose and difficulties of presenting cultural artifacts' provenance and itineraries. The excerpts are in the sequence of the time I met with these museum staff members – starting with Emma, the curator who I met first. Then followed by two educators, Lily and Margarita. Lastly, it concluded with the gallery tour led by a group of museum docents. In 4.3, I unfold the process and purposes of one gallery tour, the description of the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery, and the relevant conversations about objects' provenance and itineraries.

4.1 Interview With the Curator – Emma

The friend of mine I mentioned in Chapter 1 introduced me to Emma after she heard about my research. According to my friend, Emma is supportive, knowledgeable, and has been working at the Oriental Institute for almost two decades. Soon after, I scheduled an appointment to meet with Emma at her office. Upon request, I sent her a list of interview questions and the consent form before our meeting. We also walked to galleries during the interview to look at some collections in the Oriental Institute.

4.1.1 Emma's Background and Role in the Museum

Emma's educational background is in Egyptology. She got interested in Egyptology when she was in college and was amazed by the hieroglyphic language system. She pursued and received her doctoral degree in the beginning of the 1990s, and since then she has been involved in the research of Egyptian artifacts, religion, and social history. Emma has published a wide range of articles and books related to ancient Egyptian religion and culture and how that foretime relates to our modern life.

Emma has been working at the Oriental Institute as a curator and research associate for over 20 years. She is the coordinator of special exhibits at the Oriental Institute and the editor of exhibit catalogs. Special exhibits change from time to time, and aim to bring more audiences to revisit the museum. The rest of the museum is relatively fixed, but Emma constantly works on research and writing, and trying to refresh visitors' eyes by altering the information and graphic design on the panels in galleries. She has done temporary work at other art museums, since the Oriental Institute and the Art Institute swap objects for different exhibitions at times.

Emma is currently preparing an exhibit for 2019 to celebrate the institute's one hundred year anniversary. The exhibit is about the birth of their collection. She is interested in my research topic, and thinks stories related to provenance and object itineraries are precious and worth sharing. She mentioned the conversation between us has inspired her with more ideas for the upcoming exhibit.

4.1.2 Emma's Understanding of Provenance and Cultural Artifacts

Emma is an Egyptologist with a solid educational background and rich experiences in curatorial practices at museums. When I asked her questions related to their collection and how they generally provide provenance, she was able to give me clear and complete information.

The labels all have provenance. For example, it will say *gift of the Egypt exploration fund 1904*. So it means we got it from the British and if you know, if people know what that group is, they know the British excavated under license with the Egyptians. And then because we're supporting their research by financial donation, we got part of that division. The way generally archaeologists work in the Mid-East until like the 1930s, well, from the late 1800s till before the early 19th century, were just going in and grabbing stuff. So, when it started being regularized by the Egyptians, you would apply for a concession, which was a license to excavate in a particular site. So you'd have to say exactly what you are going to do before you start work. With the Egyptian government, you would specify what happened to the objects. So they would say, for example, if you find an intact tomb, it all stays in Egypt; if you find a tomb that's been robbed, then they will divide the materials with you. (Emma, 9-9-16)

I then asked her how the Egyptian government would decide what to keep and what to give away.

Emma explained,

I think some of the contracts said anything that's royal should stay in Egypt, depending on the decision of the Egyptian authorities. So at the end of the excavations, we laid everything out. Thousands and thousands of objects, I think it was like four different groups from Egyptian museums, and the authorities came, sorted them through, took what they wanted for their collection, and said Chicago you can have the rest of them. (Emma, 9-9-16)

I expressed my interests in such a topic and asked her if the audiences can learn such provenance information during their visitation to the gallery. Emma told me that there are a few panels in some of the galleries addressing the explicit information about the museum excavation team, how they work with the local governments in the Mid-East, and the process of

transportation; but not all the objects have thorough provenance information. She was also impressed by how many people care and focus on the legal issue and objects' itineraries behind the cultural artifacts nowadays.

It's fascinating how many people now ask "don't they want their stuff back?" So it's just much greater awareness than they're used to be. I mean the question of 'how do you get that stuff' has always been around, but people are thinking more about the legal issues, and it's just, it's a very good thing that through media, through whatever, they're thinking about these issues. And why is this enormous statue of an Egyptian king – should this be here?

Should it be in Egypt? Well, it happens to be completely ok that we have it. (Emma, 9-9-16)

Emma told me a few other stories of how the museum receives the artifacts from other countries. For example, she pointed at an artifact from Turkey during our walk in the gallery. She told me that Turkey has very strict export laws, so visitors sometimes question why and how the museum received this artifact from Turkey. She related that the museum has this artifact because at the time the team excavated that area, it was found in the land of Syria. Later Syria and Turkey changed their lands' boundaries, so the excavation area is now in Turkey. She revealed how political situations can affect archeology, and demonstrated her profound knowledge in provenance and cultural artifacts in their collection.

4.1.3 Emma's Purpose and Difficulties of Presenting Artifacts' Itineraries and Provenance

Throughout our talk, I could tell Emma was passionate about topics related to provenance and objects' itineraries. She provided me with a lot of details of how the museum gains its collection. When I asked her how accessible that information is to the visitors, she told me some of the stories and information cannot be found in the gallery spaces but most of them are listed

on the panels and labels, or included in the museum's gallery tours. Thus, I wondered what her purpose is of showing cultural artifacts' provenance and itineraries. She answered,

How we got the objects is the really interesting story. It's part of the whole history.

People want to know why is it here, how did it get to here, what else did it come in with.

Otherwise a lot of objects just don't make a lot of sense. (Emma, 9-9-16)

I then asked her as a researcher and curator, what is the most important thing that she tries to achieve when she organizes an exhibition. She claimed her goal is to help people look at the artifacts carefully. For example, "the couple of statues we saw down stairs, there are a lot of details, such as the color of the skin, the V-neck on their clothes... if they [the audience] are gonna read the label, [I aim] to assist them in looking" (Emma, 9-9-16). She also aims to build relationships between the object and the audience, and thus to assist them in remembering this experience.

I want them [the audience] to understand something about why this object was made, what's the function, when possible, give them an appreciation of their cultural context.

What I really like to do, when possible, is create connections between that object in the person's life. Because that's where you really get people thinking: this is interesting and I will remember it. (Emma, 9-9-16)

In terms of showing cultural artifact's itineraries, Emma said she is "all for full transparency". However, she also stated, "you can't tell all the stories, and you shouldn't tell all the stories" (Emma, 9-9-16). This statement led me to ask her what are the difficulties of showing cultural artifacts' itineraries in the museums. She summarized the difficulties into two major categories. The first is how to present the text and narratives in an inviting way.

As you know, people don't read. There is no guarantee that people are gonna read and understand everything in the museum. People will walk right by that [panel]. How do you give people the information they need or we think they need to understand is hard. And we need to know how much is too much, how much is not enough. (Emma, 9-9-16)

The second difficulty is that different curators have different priorities of what they think is the most important to share, as well as different museums have different missions. She referred to her experience of working at art museums:

Because the mission and objects we have, it's different than art museums. For example, in the case of Egyptian stuff, all of that is functional within the religious cult. And so it's important, I mean, if you separate this Egyptian stuff out of its context and provenance, you completely missed why these things were even made, why it looked the way it does, and why you can look at it here. And so when you're working with ancient stuff, it really is even more important, you have to give some sort of context. I've seen art historians who don't really know anything about Egypt and they certainly don't know the language, and they're writing about Egyptian objects. It completely missed the point of this. I mean it is great to approach this stuff from a counter source perspective, and look at forms and development and stuff, that is valuable. But not telling people why this was made, how it was used, through what approach it relocated is just— Because the Egyptian stuff, most of all are so functional— That you shouldn't talk about it without talk about its provenance. (Emma, 9-9-16)

Emma's purpose of showcasing the provenance information is to provide people an effective way to find the intersection between ancient objects and themselves. She claimed that the challenges that she has are not about the unclear and unfavorable history, but more about how to

present the information in an inviting way, and how to collaborate with other curators and institutes that have different missions and priorities.

In the following sub-section, I present the interview with the two educators – Lily and Margarita, to further describe the cultural histories behind the collection in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery.

4.2 Interviews With the Educators – Lily and Margarita

During my interview with Emma, she suggested that I talk to the museum staff in the education department, and kindly walked me to the office and introduced me and my research to Lily. Lily is a museum educator, and manages the youth and family programming in the Oriental Institute. We talked via email and finally set up an interview. This interview was relatively short, in comparison to Emma’s interview, since Lily’s educational background is less connected to cultural artifacts and her employment in this institute is less than one year; however it is important to include a voice from a current museum educator’s perspective from the site. And she provided important information that added to my study.

In my interview with Emma, she also recommended that I connect with Margarita – one of the main creators of a program that used to happen at the Institute called “From ground to gallery”. Margarita was a PhD candidate in Egyptology, and worked as an educational programming specialist at the Oriental Institute for almost five years. I met her and conducted an interview in the beginning of 2017.

4.2.1 Lily and Margarita’s Backgrounds and Roles in the museum

Lily identified herself as a museum educator. She is also the coordinator of youth and family programs. Her educational background is in Physics, but museum education plays an important role in her professional career. Because of her knowledge and experience in science and physics, she believes that museum education can create and facilitate educational experiences by integrating science into different disciplines, such as history and art.

Margarita, on the other hand, has been a PhD student in Egyptology at a local university for years, and recently defended her dissertation. In 2011, the Oriental Institute created a new position in the museum, where a graduate student acts as a content advisor for the public education department. The position was to advise staff members in the education department about programs that they were developing. Margarita took the position because she has profound knowledge about the academic side of the objects as well as the history. She did a considerable number of different things during her four years at this position. “I developed an online course. I helped lead tours a few times. I gave programs for teachers and high school students,” (Margarita, 1-8-17). More importantly, she developed a program that consisted of interactive activities and various lecture sessions, named “From ground to gallery: the secret life of museum objects”. She ran this program twice, in 2011 and in 2014. The activities were focused on either a single object or several related objects in a collection. I then asked her what was the purpose of this program.

One of the things that I wanted to focus on was this idea that, the object's excavation, and journey into the museum collection, and what has been done since then, is part of the history as well. So the program really was to focus not only on the ancient history of the object, but also on where it came from, and how it ended up in the museum, what its provenance was, what we do know about it, what work continues to be done on the object. (Margarita, 1-8-17)

There were a range of people that participated in the activities including members of the general public, some PhD students, as well as a few museum docents. Margarita also gave me an example of how she chose one of the statues in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery.

One of my talks was about the serving statues. These little lime stone statues. So those are interesting, because we have a general idea of where they came from. But there's a lot of uncertainty surrounding that. And it's even possible that they didn't all come from the same tomb originally, but they're kind of sold that way. Because it would sell better. So that's something that the museum obtained on the antiquity's market, as opposed to something that was excavated. That was something I wanted to talk about – is the problems that are presented when you have something in the collection that is purchased as opposed to something that was excavated. (Margarita, 1-8-17)

Margarita continued addressing the diverse itineraries behind the objects, and suggested her interests in encountering the complexity of the provenance of objects that are not excavated directly by the Institution.

4.2.2 Lily and Margarita's Understanding of Provenance and Cultural Artifacts

Lily mentioned that she has limited experience and knowledge for discussing in detail the specific collections that I selected. However, even though she has worked at this museum for a relatively short time, she has already encountered people's spoken desires for further understating of where and how the museum receives its collections, especially during the gallery tours and youth programs. In this archeology museum, people are often curious how the museum receives and transports artifacts.

Through talking with Margarita, I recognized that she has an obvious interest in exploring and showcasing cultural artifacts' provenance information. She thinks that not only the ancient part of the history is significant.

I know there are a lot of misconceptions about how objects come to museum collections. There is this general sense that if a museum has ancient objects in their collection, that basically the stuff has been looted. And that's certainly true in some institutes. (Especially at a lot of older museums. British Museum, for example, has a lot of stuff that really shouldn't be there.) The OI has always been pretty meticulous about following whatever the current antiquity law was at the time. (Margarita, 1-8-17)

A few times, she has also experienced this misconception emanating from museum visitors. For example, when she worked as a part-time cashier at the gift store during her early years at the Oriental Institute, she encountered audiences' direct questions caused by the lack of provenance information. "People will come in and actually complain to me. 'That predynastic mummy in there, that is just not right. That should be repatriated.' And I would try to explain" (Margarita, 1-8-17).

Margarita claimed that the cultural artifacts' itineraries and how they get into the museum is important also because it helps to show the audience the objects' original conditions. She used the enormous statue of King Tutankhamun, which stands in the Egyptian Gallery, as an example.

It was originally one of the pair of matching statues that were standing in front of the temple in that site. One thing that is interesting is that a lot of it was restored. This is an example of the division of the find that used to happen in the early twentieth

century. One of the statues was retained by the Egyptian gallery. I think it's in Cairo now, and the other one ended up at the OI. (Margarita, 1-8-17)

She explained that the Egyptian government gave this statue to the Oriental Institute because it was largely broken with only the torso and head left; versus the other one remaining complete. Later the Oriental Institute hired trained sculptors to restore other parts of this statue. “This is problematic in some ways, because the damage in the object is part of the history. And if they [the conservation team] made mistakes in the restoration, it could provide misleading information” (Margarita, 1-8-17). As an audience member, I cannot tell that the statue was ruined because of the good quality of restorative craftsmanship. Thus, the story of why this statue came into the museum became significant.

4.2.3 Lily and Margarita’s Purpose and Difficulties of Presenting Artifacts’ Itineraries and Provenance

Lily’s interest in museum education is to reveal the process and science of excavation, observation, and conservation. The main aim of her work is

Introducing new audiences to the science of archaeology and how that science becomes what we refer to as history. I want them to associate the process of observation, research, evidence, and inference with historical artifacts in the same manner they do with the other sciences. (Lily, 11-19-16)

She usually mentions James Henry Breasted’s work and his story in the initial interest and acquisition of museum artifacts. However, provenance was not discussed in detail. The larger discussion of provenance information was discussed in very general terms during her practice.

On the other hand, Margarita started her career as a content specialist at the Oriental Institute. She read extensive literature about museum education. “One of the things that really stood out was this goal of creating transparency. Helping museum visitors really understand what was going on in the museum beyond just the surface presentation of objects” (Margarita, 1-8-17). The goal was to help more visitors know what happened beyond the surfaces of objects, meaning revealing how the object came to the museum, as well as “behind the scene knowledge” – what happened in the storage and how the conservation team restored these artifacts. Later these all became the main subjects for Margarita to design the “Ground to gallery” program.

According to Margarita, there are three main difficulties of showing provenance information in museums.

- 1) First, there is limited space on the labels to explain the nuanced stories, and people don't necessary read everything in the museum. “I think in a lot of cases that information isn't really apparent to people when they're just browsing through the museum” (Margarita, 1-8-17).
- 2) Second, the gallery tours are usually focused on the historical context of the objects, but not how the objects came into the museum. “When they [museum visitors] are on the typical gallery tour, I think the focus tends to be more on the ancient side of the things. Like this is a fifth dynasty artifact... without getting into how it's actually come to be there. Unless a museum visitor actually asks, they are just gonna come in with their own assumptions” (Margarita, 1-8-17).
- 3) Third, there are some practical problems such as limited space and financial issues to hire lecturers who have professional knowledge to run programs. For example, Margarita

mentioned even though the “Ground to gallery” program was popular at the time, they can only offer it two times, and each time with a small group of 10-12 adults.

Margarita addressed that it is challenging to present narratives of object itineraries in an engaging way with limited space. She further mentioned the narrow understanding of provenance, which only has emphasis on the ancient part of cultural artifacts. During the interview, we both agreed that it’s helpful to reflect on these barriers in order to find corresponding solutions and strategies to improve the situation.

4.3 Observation of a Gallery Tour

For the purpose of learning in-depth information about the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery, I participated in a gallery tour at the Oriental Institute. Gallery tours are a common public program of museums and institutes. Through participating in this traditional form of museum public programing, I closely observed the gallery’s labels and panels, as well as how the docents present information around objects in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery.

4.3.1 Process and Purpose of One Gallery Tour

The gallery tour was led by four museum docents, and started in front of a series of big panels near the museum entrance. “Welcome to the Oriental Institute. This building was founded in 1919 by James Henry Breasted. This is a major archeological excavating organization. Most of the objects in the museum came from the ground” (museum docent A). She then pointed to the map on the wall, explained how the galleries were divided and arranged, as well as where the cultural artifacts mainly came from. “Today we are trying to give you guys a multi-sensory tour,

so we have replicas for you to touch and feel which we normally don't do” (museum docent A). This tour aimed to give visitors chances to experience the artifacts not only through looking, but also touching. The docents brought a small cart of replicas with them throughout the entire gallery tour. They also provided visitors time to touch and assemble those replicas.

The whole tour featured four different galleries, the Mesopotamian, the Assyrian, the Egyptian, and the Persian gallery. Each docent was in charge of introducing one gallery and one or two objects at that gallery. We followed docent A to the Mesopotamian Gallery first to look at a specific brick and learned how people from ancient times mass-produced objects. Then docent B gave us a tour in the Assyrian gallery with a focus on the monumental sculpture. After that, docent C led us into the Egyptian gallery and introduced the massive King statues and a group of servant statues from a tomb. Lastly, we came to the Persian gallery and learned the history of the colossal bullhead, and how it was assembled together. The gallery tour was about an hour long with many interactive conversations between the docents and the audience. For example, one of the visitors related the Egyptian funerary objects to the Chinese Terracotta Army, and asked if those funerary beliefs have influenced one another, which led to an interesting discussion during the tour. One of the museum docents told me the museum offers different kinds of gallery tours, some of them required reservations on line, but all of them are free to the public. “You have to come back for a high-light tour. For that one, we spend fifty minutes going through the entire gallery, but spend less time for each one” (museum docent B).

4.3.2 Description of the Selected Gallery

The Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery is one of the biggest galleries in the Oriental Institute. According to a panel near the entrance of this gallery, there are nearly 800

objects from Egypt dating from 5000 B.C. to A.D. 600 that are currently on display. The space begins with a standing statue of King Tutankhamun, 17-feet tall, colossal and solemn. The rest of the gallery has mostly small and medium- scale objects, divided into various themes: writing, kingship, funerary beliefs (tombs, mummification, protection of the dead, mummies), and daily life (art, clothing, tools, jewelry, food, music, and games). Big panels and small labels are arranged nicely around objects to help visitors explore life in ancient Egypt. There is also a shelf with well-designed family activity cards to implore visitors of different ages to interact with the artifacts.

The format of labels is mostly unified with information including: object name or title, place or culture of object, medium or materials, date of work, historical and cultural context of the object, date of acquisition, as well as method of transfer. For example, in the Egyptian daily life section, there is a group of small-scale statues on a pedestal. These statues were carved in similar styles and sizes, but in different gestures. On the label, it tells the visitors that this group of statues is made of limestone and pigment, and made in 2477 B.C at Giza.

This group of statues is thought to have come from the tomb of a courtier named Nykauinpu at Giza. According to Egyptian beliefs, food and the pleasurable activities of daily life could be guaranteed in the afterlife by representing them in the tomb. As a result, statues such as these, which show individuals performing everyday tasks, were placed in tombs to perform necessary services for the deceased in the afterlife. (museum label)

This paragraph introduces the cultural context of why these statues have been acquired in the first place. The information continues:

This group of statues is especially important for our understanding of statue groups of this type. It has traditionally been assumed that such figures are anonymous servants, yet

several of the statuettes in this group are identified as sons and daughters of the tomb owners. (museum label)

The writing is precise without elusive vocabulary. At the bottom of the label, it clearly states that the objects were purchased in Cairo in 1920.

4.3.3 Relevant Conversations About Objects' Itineraries and Provenance

For my study, I paid close attention to one selected gallery, the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery, and explored how the museum curator and educators contextualized their acquisitions to the public. In this gallery tour, docent C introduced the Egyptian gallery and its collection in general first, then emphasized two specific Egyptian cultural artifacts: the massive King statues and the group of small-scale servant statues. Here is an excerpt of the opening of his introduction:

So we're now in the Egyptian gallery. I'd like to start off with a real anecdote. Everyone likes stories, especially when it's true. In 1884, James Henry Breasted, who is the first director of the OI was given five hundred dollars by William Rainey Harper, who was the president of the University of Chicago at the time. And I imagine that's a great amount in 1884. William told him to buy some artifacts: buy as many as you can, and bring back as much change as you can. So he went to Egypt with his wife, during their honeymoon. Later she wrote in the letters that she sent to her family members that he was so good at haggling. Sometimes he spent up to three days to buy a simple mummified animal. It's very interesting that James came back with some funeral objects, which we have copies that we will look at them later; he brought back some antiques, and some mummified animals. We have 800 objects today on showcase here, and most of them have been dug out by the OI

archeology excavation team, or purchased through the antique market in Egypt. (museum docent C)

The docent used a story of how the museum's first director haggled over items' prices during his honeymoon when purchasing the museum's first collection of cultural artifacts to attract visitors' interest. This also provided important information of these objects' provenance and itineraries. Such information cannot be found anywhere on the label or panels in the gallery space; however, the informative anecdote provided a relaxing and vivid transition to help the audience traverse from one gallery to another gallery.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented one descriptive case study of the Oriental Institute through interviewing three museum staff members and observing one gallery tour. Each participant presented their purpose, challenges, and suggestions to presenting provenance information based on their professional experience. Through observation, I noticed that the labels and panels were written carefully with information including narratives of object itineraries. During the multi-sensory gallery tour, the museum docents provided participants chances to not only look at the objects, but also to touch and feel the replicas to gain a better understanding of materials, shapes and weights of the artifacts. The docent also addressed stories of objects' find spots and itineraries in the beginning of the tour to engage audience members.

In the following chapter, I share results of the study garnered from the interviews and observations through a pedagogical lens. I then present suggestions for art museum educators and art teachers to incorporate cultural artifacts' provenance information and itineraries in teaching.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

5.1 Discussion

Through a literature review and personal experience, I noticed the informational gap between provenance in art historical and archeological contexts, as well as the lack of thorough provenance information at art museums. The purpose of my study was to investigate how one selected museum, the Oriental Institute engages with cultural artifacts' provenance. The provenance information is not only about "the facts of ownership and transfer", but also "to explore ideas and narratives about the origins and itineraries of objects, consider the historical uses of provenance information, and draw attention to the transformative power of ownership" (Feigenbaum & Reist, 2012, p. 1). Thus, I suggest art educators take object itineraries as provenance into museum education and school curriculum, to avoid only providing a general location or simple name, and to include a more complete narrative that reveals the history and transformative power of ownerships.

My study suggested that there is rich information included in cultural artifacts' itineraries. Unlike the misconceptions of many people, who often think cultural artifacts from the East are mostly gained through unlawful approaches, the excavation team from the Institute actually dug up most of the objects from Egypt among the 800 objects displayed at the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery. In addition, parts of the collection on display were purchased from Egyptian antique markets by the first director of the Oriental Institute, who went to Egypt with his wife for their honeymoon in 1884 with a 500-dollar grant. The docent used this story of transformative ownership as an entry for the gallery tour to engage audience members. The curator Emma also provided an in-depth explanation to the legal issues of the cultural artifacts from the Mid-East to the West from past to present. The narratives of objects' itineraries

have the power of bridging different disciplines, such as art, history, archeology, and anthropology, as well as engaging students and audiences in different settings.

Various public engagement events were designed and have been run through the years by different educators in the Oriental Institute, such as the “From ground to gallery: the secret life of museum objects” program organized by Margarita, as well as the multi-sensory gallery tour that I observed. Specifically, “Ground to gallery” features the story of living histories of selected objects in the museum collections, with emphasis on where the objects came from, how they ended up in the museum, and what work continues to be done on the objects. This gave the audience members a chance to explore the object’s journey between its findspot and museum. During the multi-sensory gallery tour, the museum docents provided participants chances to not only look at the objects, but also to touch and feel the replicas to gain a better understanding of materials, shapes and weights of the artifacts. In the beginning of the tour the docent said, “I’d like to start off with a real anecdote. Everyone likes stories, especially when it’s true” (museum docent C). This suggests the value of stories behind the collection. Those stories are essential to attract an audience’s attention to learn more about the cultural artifacts. I also noticed that the labels and panels are written carefully with information including place of object, date of work, medium/materials, date of acquisition, historical and cultural description, and provenance information (dates of ownership, places of ownership, and methods of transfer). This allows the viewers to have a broader understanding of the cultural artifacts, and why they can see it in the museum context.

Through interviewing museum staff members, I gained insight about their purposes of showcasing the culturally relevant provenance in the Oriental Institute. There is much more awareness nowadays from the visitors who care about the history of the cultural artifacts, the

international relationships, as well as the legal issues. “It's fascinating how many people now ask ‘don't they want their stuff back?’ So it's just much greater awareness than they're used to be” (Emma). Margarita also suggested that oftentimes researchers focus on the ancient part of the object; however, the object's itineraries after excavation are an essential part of the history, too. A clear and thorough context of provenance can provide visitors an effective way to have a cultural-historical understanding of the artifact. And this fits into one of the needs and requirements of multicultural education.

During the interviews, participants suggested various challenges of providing objects' itineraries in the gallery space. While some museums might deal with issues of unclear or unfavorable history, the challenge at the Oriental Institute is mainly about how to present the information in organized and inviting ways. Both the curator and an educator mentioned that the graphic design and presentation of the information are important because people don't necessarily read everything at the museum if the information is poorly presented. The other difficulty is that different museums, curators, and educators have different emphases and missions. Some of them do not value provenance as much, or only talk about it in brief and general terms. Overall, they believe in the power of provenance and the necessity of providing object itineraries in the museum and other public engagement events. In the following subsections, I will summarize the strategies that Emma, Lily, and Margarita mentioned during the interview as recommendations for museum educators and curators to provide more thorough provenance information as pedagogical tools.

5.1.1 Emma's Strategies

Throughout the interview, I noticed that Emma has profound knowledge and experience in cultural artifacts and curating. “I am glad you think our museum is doing a ‘pretty good’ job

on presenting provenance. It is what it is: we still have long way to go” (Emma, 9-9-16). Emma claimed that different museums and curators approach artifacts differently. For example, the art historians do not necessary give the audience a lot of contextual information related to the cultural history, but more about the art form and aesthetics. However, she thinks that there should be some kind of middle ground, where art historians and archeologists can combine their knowledge to engage more audiences. Emma mentioned three strategies to effectively provide provenance and objects’ itineraries in the museum throughout the interview.

1) First, present the actual document or journal from the collector.

As I mentioned before, Emma is preparing an exhibit, which relates to the birth of the institute’s collection. The idea of incorporating hidden stories has resonated with her for a while; for example, she shared that the Egyptologist James Henry Breasted and his wife honeymooned to Egypt in 1894 and purchased the first collection of artifacts. “It’s a really cool idea. Because we also have a little tiny notebook, that he kept record of all his purchases. We could have that open, show his handwriting! Like put a journal with a listing of the objects next to the actual artifacts” (Emma, 9-9-16). She suggested that showing the actual documents from the collector could be an effective way to engage the audiences to learn more about the history.

2) Second, pay attention to the design in the space, including exhibition layout and graphic design.

“There are so many things we take for granted. Do you think the wall color reminds you that you’re walking into a different culture?” she asked me when we walked from one gallery to another gallery. She further addressed that the presentation of the content is important when we walked by a panel in one of the galleries.

There's too big of block text, it doesn't look inviting. I think we should at least break it up. Do

an introduction with a few lines. Then show what is this and where it's from, and maybe shorter little blocks of what are the symbols... Again, it's often not the content, but the presentation of the content. (Emma, 9-9-16)

3) Third, use other public engagement events, including gallery tours, audio tours, and workshops with a specific topic to tell the stories.

For example, Emma mentioned,

Introducing these stories are also the job of a tour guide [docent] or an audio tour because there is a limit of what you can put on the labels ... there is a program we did several times which was called 'From ground to gallery'. That was an event created by a graduate student, who was looking at specific objects, and doing activities about the excavation, and how exactly the objects got to this gallery. It was really popular, because people like the kind of the behind-the-scene thing. (Emma, 9-9-10)

Emma provided her strategies to better present objects' itineraries from a curator's perspective. Because of her role in the museum, the approaches are geared towards improving audience members' experiences in the gallery space. In the next section, I will focus on the strategies from the museum educators' perspectives.

5.1.2 Lily's and Margarita's Strategies

Lily's practice and focus are more related to exploring how to engage audiences with learning history through a scientific approach. She values the provenance information, but addressed that the provenance information is a just topic of discussion in their educational programming once in a while. "The question arises during guided tours occasionally; but in the

programming for families, k-12 students or their teachers, it is very rarely considered or brought up” (Lily, 11-10-16).

Lily’s ideas represent a current museum educator’s perspective from the site. By the end of the interview, I asked Lily what some of the strategies are that she has observed or she can think of for other museum educators, and for her future teaching. She claimed that instead of avoiding the complex cultural history behind the objects, it’s important to be sincere and honest about questioning provenance information behind cultural artifacts. The same strategy can apply to other museum institutions, including art museums.

Being open and honest about the challenges in procuring provenance information is important. If an attempt was made to bridge that gap, interested parties should know about that attempt, its successes, and its failures. For art educators, it’s very much the same approach. (Lily, 11-19-16)

Similarly, Margarita, also values the importance of providing visitors with the object’s provenance and itineraries, although she admits there are difficulties. She provided a few strategies to deal with such problems. For example, because of the limited resources at museums, such as space and money, she suggested considering using more online resources, such as social media. “I know the Oriental Institute has an educator blog that I’ve contributed a few times to; and also a Facebook page. I think that might be an interesting way to showcase objects in the collection in a more in-depth way” (Margarita, 1-8-17). Another strategy she offered is to provide more take-away materials for audiences who have specific learning needs. When she reflected on the “Ground to gallery” program and her experience as an educator at the museum, she said, “It will be more helpful if I could provide more written information that people can actually take home” (Margarita, 1-8-17).

In terms of suggestions for art museum curators and educators, Margarita understands that sometimes art museums are more focused on the aesthetic aspect of the cultural artifacts, and has different approaches to present objects. However, she believes it is still important to try to incorporate more contextual and historical information. “Sometimes there's a label that's just nothing. It could be frustrating for people who are going through the museum and wanting to know more” (Margarita, 1-8-17). She suggested curators going through the museum archives should communicate with archeologists and experts who have professional knowledge in certain content areas for thorough information.

In this sub-section, I presented information about three distinguished museum staff members’ strategies of presenting object itineraries as provenance in the Oriental Institute. In conclusion, we all agree that different museums and schools have different situations and missions; however, as educators we can learn from their approaches to presenting cultural artifact’s itineraries to inform our pedagogies and students’ experiences.

5.2 Implications

Cultural artifacts are human-made objects that carry cultural context, including beliefs, values, and traditions through history. “Whether conceptual artwork or an ancient archaeological artifact, objects are always the next best thing: they are relics of an original situation that can never recur, much as Heraclitus wrote, you never can step into the same river twice” (Helguera, 2010, p. 121). Thus, the cultural artifacts can effectively help people understand a time and space, as well as the complexity of diverse culture (Chung, 2003; Higgs & McNeal, 2006; Marcus, 2007). According to Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr (2001),

understanding the complex issues of cultural diversity is often studied as a part of the school reform movement known as Multicultural Education... It was then, and still is, an educational process dedicated to providing more equitable opportunities for disenfranchised individuals and groups to gain in social, political, and especially educational arenas. (p.8)

As concrete manifestations of knowledge, culture, and history, cultural artifacts are increasingly significant because of the emphasis of multicultural art education and integrative pedagogy (Chung, 2009).

Despite the connections between cultural artifacts and multicultural art education that were mentioned in the Chapter 2, the problems of presenting cultural artifacts and multicultural art still exist in art museums and schools. As Chung (2009) stated, “Although many historical objects are presented in art museums because of their social, religious, utilitarian, and technological significance, they are usually approached from a formalist standpoint and displayed as fine art objects in a decontextualized fashion” (p. 33). Oftentimes art museums present cultural artifacts with limited and incomplete provenance in the gallery; for instance, only showing provenance information as a general location or owner’s name, but neglecting the object’s complex itineraries and cultural history. This cannot meet visitors’ expectations, especially those who have questions about how the objects relocate to museums or to different countries. The lack of object itineraries also leads to potential misunderstandings in terms of cultural history. Through researching related work in Chapter 2, I realized that current literature has not acknowledged the intersection and connection between object itineraries as provenance and multicultural art education.

Meanwhile, as a K-12 art educator, I see my colleagues and myself sometimes unconsciously misrepresent others' cultures by focusing too much on the formative values, but overlooking the cultural artifacts' itineraries as part of the provenance information. As a result, students produce artworks that are aesthetically similar to each other and similar to the cultural artifact; however, they rarely reflect students' creativity, their understanding of different cultures, or how diverse cultures relate to their everyday life. Thus, to address the object itineraries as provenance information is significant to teach and understand cultural diversity, privilege, and possible oppression.

My study suggested that art educators should see cultural artifacts as a helpful tool to facilitate multicultural art education. However, only a formative study on cultural artifacts is not enough. In the art museum, museum educators and curators should take the graphic design and layout of the panels and labels into account. Knowing that audiences tend to skip the information that is often packed into one small space, with poorly-written or overly scholastic text, it is important to be aware of the power of effective graphic design. Museum educators should communicate with exhibition design teams and develop skills of designing if possible. Educators should also explore different approaches to present thorough provenance information by incorporating technologies and utilizing public engagement events. It is common that museum educators feel restricted by small budgets and spaces, while school art teachers may have limited class time with students. Thus, both sets of educators should use online resources including blogs, audio devices, and social media as teaching materials to maximize learning.

In the art room, it is important to realize the difficulties to introduce and present others' cultures and objects which art teachers are not usually familiar with. Because culture is constantly changing, and easily misrepresented as well as stereotyped, teachers should always

spend time to research and find more thorough historical contexts through professional approaches. For example, a teacher can collect information through libraries, museum archives, as well as talk to people who study in specific fields with professional knowledge.

5.3 Conclusion

The study started with a failed attempt to help my students find out object itineraries as provenance information behind cultural artifacts at an art museum. With interests in art education and museum studies, I conducted a descriptive case study to closely look at one specific gallery at an archeology museum in the Midwestern United States. The aim of my study was to better understand and describe the purpose and difficulties of presenting provenance information behind cultural artifacts in one selected museum, the Oriental Institute. As an archeology museum and research institute, I noticed that the provenance information was better presented compared to many other museums during my first visits. The information displayed at the gallery includes photos and texts related to how the museum obtains the object and how the object transports to the museum. Through analyzing interviews and observations, I gained knowledge from museum professionals about their purpose and strategies of presenting such information; at the same time I realized that even in this research-based archeology museum, where cultural, historical, as well as scientific context of cultural artifacts are the heart of the museum mission, there are still curators and educators that overlooked the object itineraries as part of the provenance information.

The participants suggested the significance and necessity of a more thorough provenance and itineraries information behind cultural artifacts during interviews. First, such information is part of the context to help visitors better understand the cultural object's function and history.

Second, the misconception of how museums received their collection, especially non-western artifacts, is common. I then looked into the difficulties of providing such information at museums. Based on the challenges, I summarized the strategies and recommendations for art educators who are interested in using cultural artifacts as part of their curriculum. For art museum educators, the strategies include going through archives and conservation departments to find in-depth information, working on the layout of museum labels and take-way booklets to provide more inviting written information, as well as utilizing gallery tours, audio devices, and other related museum public programs to offer learners chances to interact with the professionals and objects in multiple approaches. For K-12 educators, it is important to acknowledge the power of object itineraries behind cultural artifacts before introducing them to students. Art teachers should find resources to familiarize themselves with cultural artifacts and their itineraries to avoid misconceptions about provenance, stereotyping or simplifying others' cultures, as well as merely focusing on aesthetic and formal aspects of the objects. Because of the limited time of each class period in schools, art teachers should be encouraged to create well-designed handouts, read or post online blogs and/or provide multi-media files to share such information with students, too.

Through the research, I hoped to look into the hidden stories of the cultural artifacts, not only in the ancient times, but also the in-between stories, how the objects ended up in the museum, and what work continues to be done around them. I hoped to highlight the significance of object itineraries as part of the provenance information, and provide effective methods to incorporate such knowledge in art curricula at museums and school systems to promote multicultural art education and provide students a more complete context of cultural artifacts.

Cultural artifacts are important evidence of power, history, and identity. Because most of the museums and art curricula are object-based, cultural artifacts are essential tools for educators to enhance students learning. During the process of my study, I realized that more research is needed to further understand the specific categories of provenance, and how object itineraries as provenance information impacts art education, especially multicultural art education. It is my hope that I will be able to continue this research in the future and utilize what I have learned in my own future K-12 art classroom.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear _____,

My name is Luo Wang, and I am a Master of Art's Candidate for Art Education at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. Thank you very much for getting back to my friend _____ so fast, so I have the chance to communicate with you directly.

Due to my previous experience about teaching art in museum context, I realized the problem of the lacking provenance information around culture artifacts. After _____ talked about her experience in the OI, I came across the museum and think that you guys are doing a great job in providing not only past ownership, but also engaging aspects of cultural history. I am very interested in learning more about how and why the OI provides such information around the collections, and what are some difficulties and suggestions to effectively providing a more thorough provenance information to public audiences.

Here I have attached my thesis proposal if you want to know more about my research. I sincerely ask may I go to observe some gallery tours, and to sit down and talk with you, _____, and _____ by appointment? I am currently working on the IRB form (the protection of research subjects), and I truly looking forward to hear from you all soon.

All the best,

Luo

Luo Wang
MA Candidate, Art Education, School of Art and Design,
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

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APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A. Personal background and role in the museum

- Tell me about your (education) background
- What is your role as a curator or educator in the museum? What is the core of your work?

B. Understanding of provenance

- Where are the cultural artifacts in the Joseph and Mary Girmshaw Egyptian Gallery originally come from?
- How did the museum acquire these cultural artifacts? Pick one (or a few) and expand on that.
- If it is not coming directly from the excavation team, what is the provenance behind the object?
- Is the museum always showcasing such information? Were there any misunderstanding or questions from the visitors over the years regarding the information included/excluded?

C. Purpose and difficulties of showcasing provenance information behind cultural artifacts

- Are there any difficulties in collecting the history and story behind the object?
- Are there any challenges in presenting such knowledge for public?
- What are your aims in displaying the cultural artifacts and its provenance information?
- What is the most important thing that you want the audience take away with?

D. Strategies of better presenting such information

- What would you suggest for educators and teachers to navigate the educational and information gap caused by the lack of chronological ownership stories?
- Do you have suggestions for art museum curators or educators when presenting cultural artifacts?