

**Articulating Artifacts: Negotiating Object Biographies with Human Mediation at the
Japanese American Museum of San José**

A Project Report

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By

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The Undersigned Graduate Committee Approves the Project Report Titled
Articulating Artifacts: Negotiating Object Biographies with Human Mediation
at the Japanese American Museum of San José

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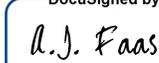
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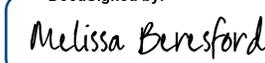
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Abstract

This report outlines my project in collaboration with the Japanese American Museum of San José (JAMsj), that applied ethnographic techniques in the examination of material culture and heritage management. A grassroots organization at its core, JAMsj was an organizational partner interested in evaluating their own institutional visibility within their local community of Japantown. They were also interested in receiving feedback on their exhibition spaces, particularly in how visitors and prospective donors interpreted and connected with the exhibits to see if there was any room for augmentation or change.

Informed by anthropological theory in relation to object biographies, this project aimed to investigate how the curation of material culture within museums could affect visitor experience and institutional visibility. I further examined how JAMsj utilized their object assemblages in the construction of identity and storytelling, and in the evaluation of which degrees they were successful in cultivating these connections with their stakeholders. Additionally, I supplied the museum with an evaluative needs assessment report, from which the interrelationships between artifacts and visitor mediation were explained and explored.

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I also want to give a huge thanks to all my participants who so graciously agreed to contribute to this project—all of the museum affiliates, community members, and other individuals I encountered and had the pleasure to converse with. They provided me with so much insight and invaluable data imperative towards my project's development.

Finally, I would like to thank those personal to me. My wonderful parents who raised a knowledge-hungry and open-minded kid, my beautiful roommate, Sarah, and my ever-so-supportive partner, David. They all served as primary cheerleaders in my academic interests and offered me love and encouragement, even when I really wanted to give up. Without all their support, none of this would have been possible. I dedicate this project to each one of them.

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Chapter 1: Project Preface

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the anthropological scholarship and theoretical insights I used to inform the design of my project in collaboration with the Japanese American Museum of San Jose (JAMsj). Throughout the duration of several months, I conducted qualitative, ethnographic research at the museum, followed by several physical deliverables. One such deliverable consisted of an evaluative needs assessment report that outlined my research findings within the exhibitions and offered suggestions of exhibition enhancement based on said findings. The other deliverable consisted of a short, supplemental art catalogue used to provide more contextual information for visitors within the museum's *WWII Incarceration* exhibit.

JAMsj is interested in evaluating their institutional visibility within their local community following a significant, transitional period. At the time of this project, the museum was in the process of hiring a new Executive Director and, in fact, underwent this process twice during the duration of my research and evaluation phase. This, paired with socio-economic transitions stemming from re-opening post COVID-19 quarantine, caused the museum to enter a sort of curation crisis—increasing artifact donation without conservation space, archiving, record keeping, and social outreach being main areas in which the institution seemed to struggle. Of particular importance, however, was visitor interpretation of their exhibition spaces.

Utilizing anthropological theory, and my own ethnographic toolkit at my disposal, I designed this project to identify the ways JAMsj could foster and improve their connections with stakeholders—and additionally enhance future museum operations through proper assessment and augmentation of their housed material assemblages. Additionally, I draw upon the

anthropological frameworks relating to object biographies and human negotiation to assist the institution in understanding the nuances of these relationships when it comes to heritage management and the curation of object assemblages within museum exhibitions.

My Project: An Overview

Museums and cultural institutions, like JAMsj, serve a complex mission beyond the housing and collecting of static material acquisitions. Through the careful curation of their collections, museums represent public discourse relating to community identity and collective memory (Jules-Rosette and Osborn 2020). For many, museums also serve as spaces that empower heritage preservation, imagination, and intergenerational learning whilst simultaneously existing as prestigious entities of scholarship and research (Macdonald 2022). When I first came to JAMsj, I was told that the museum aspired to maintain its identity as a prominent reminder of Japanese American history and continuity within a diverse cultural landscape, and to outreach to its local stakeholders on a more intimate level. Of special importance to the museum is the narrative associated with WWII incarceration and the memorialization of camp experiences, including the generational impacts of remembrance.

JAMsj aspires to initiate important dialogue—through their collections and material artifacts—for those either unfamiliar with the incarceration and contributions of Japanese American immigrants in America’s cultural landscape or connected through their own heritage and experiences. In partnering with JAMsj, it was my hope to aid the museum in cultivating an understanding of how the collections have assisted in mission goals regarding visitor experience and cultural preservation, and to provide JAMsj with an assessment regarding the exhibition spaces, operationalization connected to and influencing the collections, and deeper perception into stakeholder ethnographies (narratives) and needs.

Methods

Throughout this project, I identified the ways the museum strategically employed its collections as cultural tools to connect with its stakeholders and utilized my findings in the documentation of the interrelationships between curated narratives and public interpretations. To do this, I spent around 5-6 months between April and October of 2022, collecting extensive ethnographic data from over 60+ hours of interviews with museum stakeholders—both affiliates of the museum and first-time visitors—and supplemental hours of participant observation within the gallery spaces in the examination of visitor and docent behaviors.

Sometimes, the visitor may not always see what the museum and its staff believe to be conspicuous. So often do visitors reinterpret spaces and their thematic significance in ways that curators may not have intended (Jules-Rosette and Osborn 2020). Interpretation, in this case, can be wholly dependent on the methods by which an institution utilized their material culture within their exhibition spaces. To gain better insight into these interpretations, I employed the usage of walking interviews, wherein I accompanied visitors through the exhibition spaces and invited them to give end feedback regarding their experiences.

The months spent investigating JAMsj's collections and community provided me with sufficient data to assist the institution with one of their curatorial projects and to provide them with a collective needs assessment outlining stakeholder ethnographies concerning the museum experience, and a list of recommended actions and resources for the museum to utilize and implement in feasible future action plans. I thematically coded and analyzed the qualitative data I procured— from interviews, transcripts, and field notes—to find overlapping parallels. Sampling techniques, especially during interviews, derived from a mix of snow-ball sampling wherein participants recruited or recommended other participants, and criterion sampling, wherein

participants were considered in accordance with pre-established criteria (first-time visitors, museum staff, etc.). These sampling methods assisted in networking with otherwise hard-to-reach participants and populations, and in maintaining a common denominator throughout my diverse pool of participants.

Object Biography and the Politics Behind Curation

Museums and cultural heritage sites have been regarded as historically contested places of cultural veneration and simultaneous marginalization among racialized and misrepresented communities (Macdonald 2022; Parezo 2015). Historically, museums were conceived through colonial endeavors, guilty of detaching the artifacts they housed from their original communities both contextually and culturally, showcasing the exotic “other” and serving selected publics with physical justification for colonial expansion and the legitimization of racial exploitation (Macdonald 2022; Lyngwa 2022; Parezo 2015; Whittington 2021). Even today, museums exist as intersectional institutions of learning, situated in complex positionalities of colonial erasure, social mistrust, and power hierarchies.

Within the past few decades, contemporary museums are striving towards decolonization and the promotion of our society’s diverse social structures by shifting towards a more people-centered museology, decentering white, Euro-American narratives in decolonial praxis (Macdonald 2022; Parezo 1987; Whittington 2021). Institutions are embracing their role as primary sites of academic investigation, not just for those within the academic field, but to more general audiences whose intellectual growth can be stimulated, and whose cultural sensibilities can be developed by the content they encounter in exhibition halls (Macdonald 2022; Parezo 1987; Vertovec 2010). This shift can be referred to as epistemological decolonization—that is, a

need to reclaim and uplift non-western ontologies and epistemologies in the reconstruction of cultural institutions (Lyngwa 2022; Whittington 2021).

As such, museums are now beginning to recognize the significance of cultural copyright, accountability, transparency, and the political power of what extant anthropological theory calls “object biographies” (Macdonald 2022; Joy 2009; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Lyngwa 2022). An object biography refers to the theory that objects, much like people, can accrue histories and stories over time, dependent on the individuals and places in which they come into contact (Ames 1991; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Maggio 2014; Zeitlyn 2012). Objects thus enter museum collections with their own memoirs attached. Anthropologists Chris Gosden and Jody Joy (1999) further argue that material culture is subjective, capable of being reinterpreted through forms of human mediation—meaning that object biographies can be storied by human actors as they are subjected to social interactions with places and people (Ames 1991; Joy 2009).

Object biography derives from social anthropology and has been largely adopted by post-processual archaeologists in the examination of objects and their relationships with human actors (Friberg and Huvila 2019; Joy 2009). Many researchers have thus applied the biographical method to study the interrelationships of cultural trade, identity and social construction through objects and material culture (Friberg and Huvila 2019). This posthumanist turn in the fields of archaeology and anthropology calls for de-centering of human actors in the recognition of influential non-human actors, disrupting dualistic thinking that may view the social being and physical object as separate (Humphries and Smith 2014; Joy 2009).

Since museums are charged with the dissemination of knowledge, the ways in which they curate object assemblages—and thus their biographies—within their exhibition halls is of substantial importance. As object biographies can be storied by humans and places, they provide

a stage for the vicarious experiencing of shared life stories (Humphries and Smith 2014; Friberg and Huvila 2019). When consciously curated by museums within an exhibition space, these object biographies may accumulate into a collective voice—a storytelling tool with the ability to relay an overarching theme, event, or narrative to audiences (Ames 1991; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Maggio 2014; Magi and Lepik, 2019; Rotenberg 2014).

Although museums are educational spaces, human actors such as visitors and museum officials imbue the objects within with meaning through the strategic maintenance and manipulation of artifact assemblages (Ames 1991; Johnson 2019; Maggio 2014; Parezo 2015). Artifacts within museums are multidimensional actors that coalesce with human counterparts to mediate this interpretation and evoke attachments imperative towards the understanding of cultural representation and historic evaluation. Curation is thus a prominent political procedure from which artifacts can relay such stories and narratives, as interpretation can be swayed by the ways objects and assemblages are presented within an exhibition space to various visitors (Ames 1991; Friberg and Huvila 2019; Johnson 2019; Maggio 2014; Mixter and Henry 2017; Vertovec 2010).

Theoretical Implementation: Issues in Cultural Heritage Management

For decades, museums have utilized material culture as a means of examining the transitioning of industrialization, urbanization, mass immigration, and many more transformative processes. Artifacts have also given insight into the intimate dealings of economic disparities, strife, segregation, discrimination, interpersonal relationships, social organization, and built worlds and environments (Ryzewski 2022, 21-23). In the realm of social science, material culture is often utilized as a catalyst to interpret meaning behind the everyday lives of hidden populations and communities who have been historically overlooked and overshadowed by

dominant historic narratives—usually in favor of dominant and largely White histories and stories (Dubrow 2000; Lowenthal 2008; Ryzewski 2022; Takaragawa 2022).

Historically, this overshadowing has been habitually reflected in the realm of cultural heritage management and further mirrored in cultural repositories such as museums and archives (Ames 1991; Ames 2006; Ryzewski, 2022; Zeitlyn 2012). However, as museums shift towards a more decolonized people-centered museology, and the disciplines of anthropology—and as an extension, archaeology—follow the progressive trend of collaborative, community-based project initiatives as a more diverse and inclusive discipline. Smaller, community-led museums, especially, are developing critically reflexive discourse that counter the decontextualizing narratives historically found in institutions, and further acknowledge past power imbalances, issues concerning race, discrimination, marginalization, and gender exclusion in decolonial praxis (Lyngwa 2022; Macdonald 2022; Ryzewski 2022).

The United States is discernibly a country of extensive diversity. However, historic preservation is only beginning to address this reality in its core institutions (Alivizatou 2012; McCracken 2016; Kaufman 2004). Immigrants from Asia and the Pacific Islands, for instance, have played significantly large roles in the development of landscapes across America, yet these landscapes and cultural heritage attributions have been significantly under documented, as is reflected in the number of heritage sites attributed to Asian Americans protected by Section 106 in federal heritage management laws, and in the number of exhibitions featuring material culture relating to these communities that are available for public dissemination (Dubrow 2000; Takaragawa 2002).

While some properties and resources associated with Asian Americans have been priorly identified in geographically defined archaeological surveys, there still exists significant gaps in

both documentary records and in contemporary scholarship required for preservation planners in the documentation of Asian American cultural resources. These gaps could be filled by the employment of public participation methods in ethnography, such as the procurement of oral histories, and active advocacy with community representatives and stakeholders (Dubrow 2000; Kogod 1994).

The simple fact remains that a long history of marginalization, oppression, and discrimination has mitigated against aspects of ethnic communities of color and their cultural heritage as it is perceived in the field of cultural heritage management who determine what is worthy of preservation based on levels of cultural or historical “significance” (Ames 1999; Dubrow 2000; Lowenthal 2008; Ryzewski 2022). Furthermore, cultural resources associated with marginalized communities often face the additional challenge of historic erasure, thus devaluing their past experiences and further compromising the integrity of surviving places, properties, and artifacts (Dubrow 2000; Ryzewski 2022).

The Japanese American Museum as a Paramount Site of Investigation

The most notorious and effectively preserved sites reflecting Asian Pacific American resources are in extensive urban areas. Places such as Chinatowns, Japantowns, and Koreatowns exist as situated ethnic enclaves that express community identities and shared experiences founded on commonalities represented in culture and language. They also prevail as ramifications of restrictive and discriminatory immigration policies regarding the sale and rental of properties amongst marginalized colored communities (Dubrow 2000; Fukuda 2014; Nagareda 2017).

A primary example of this can be seen in America's Japanese American (JA) population. Although the designation of WWII internment camps as sites of historic recognition worth preserving on a federal level has served as an appropriate reminder of unjust relocation and a defining moment in American history, it has still glossed over other epicenters of important Japanese American life and influence in the pre and postwar periods (Dubrow 2000; Takaragawa 2002). This can be seen reflected in San Jose's historic Japantown neighborhood—a cultural landscape historically saturated with deep knitted heritage attachments founded on the economic and agricultural contributions of the Japanese American community in the Bay Area.

As a neighborhood, community-based museum, JAMsj is an institution aware of its crucial role in showcasing the powerful milieus of Japanese American contribution and achievement to America's socio-economic landscape, in addition to its position as a public organization tasked with fostering a collective identity that reinforces continuities with those generations that will come after (JAMsj n.d.; Lowenthal 2008). The museum is a built environment that accrues important, sentimental meaning due to its association with compelling events (notably the incarceration), individuals, and communities and these sentimentalities are reflected in the material culture they share.

Project Goals

Primary project goals were as followed:

- ❖ **To examine how institutional visibility and meaning can be articulated by visitors through curatorial methodologies, such as the enhancing or alternative exclusion of object biographies.**

- ❖ **To determine where “gaps” in storytelling and curation lay and what could be done to rectify such issues for future project initiatives.**
- ❖ **To utilize research findings in demonstration of the benefits of an applied anthropological approach in the construction of community-based identity and collaboration.**
- ❖ **To employ findings in a way that foregrounds the important interrelationships between artifact and human actor and the social relationship with material remains within a historically underrepresented community.**
- ❖ **To serve a broader practical community involvement—that is to further contribute to anthropological scholarship that is rooted in a consultative, community-based initiative.**

Roadmap

This report is divided into three sections. Chapter 1, of which has been discussed above, centers on the anthropological scholarship used to inform the design and implementation of my project in collaboration with the Japanese American Museum of San Jose, focusing predominantly on extant literature concerning theory related to material remains in heritage management and the prevalence of object biographies within cultural institutions. Chapter 2 is an article for *Practicing Anthropology*, and summarizes the story, execution, and findings of my project in partnership with JAMsj. Finally, chapter 3 concludes this report with an empirical reflection of my project outcomes, anthropological difference and contributions, project limitations, and considers further work in the applied field of anthropology within museum sectors.

CHAPTER 2: Articulating Artifacts – A Community Partnership with JAMsj

Abstract: In this article I present the results of a community-based partnership with the Japanese American Museum of San Jose (JAMsj), an institution founded on collaborative grassroots preservation efforts in California's Bay Area, that applied ethnographic techniques in the examination of museum assemblages and the ways artifacts could give voice to the overarching organizational narrative. The goal of this project was to examine relationships between institution, material culture, and community stakeholders. Additionally, this project served as an evaluation of techniques and operations implemented by the museum in the promotion of these connections. I further discuss the utilization of object biographies in investigating curation, and how such methods can be utilized to elucidate collection management and curatorship.

Keywords: Storytelling, object biography, heritage management, ethnographies, identity

When I was first introduced to JAMsj, I was told by the staff that the museum aspired to maintain its identity as a foundational site of Japanese American historic significance, assist in the preservation of a unique cultural heritage for future generations to grow from, and to appeal to a wider audience of community stakeholders. Of particular importance to the museum was the memorialization of the Japanese American camp experience during WWII and the generational impacts of remembrance contributed to this event. JAMsj hopes to initiate dialogue for those potentially unfamiliar with the incarceration, and to present those connected through their heritage or experiences with a means of cogitation. Of equal importance, however, was the representation of Japantown's history, a multivocal site of culturally rich diversity and significant urban expansion.

In partnering with JAMsj, our objective was to understand how the museum collections facilitate the visitor experience and enhance cultural preservation. Additionally, it was my intention to provide the institution with an evaluation of curatorial practices within their exhibition spaces and deeper perception into stakeholder ethnographies regarding the exhibits. Overall, I aimed to identify the ways the museum staff strategically employed their material assemblages as cultural tools to connect with audiences, and to utilize my findings in the documentation of the interrelationships between curated narratives and public interpretations. However, results offered insight into more than just these interpretive relationships, finding that displayed objects presented a more nuanced view of museum management and storytelling.

Informed Insights

For many museum visitors, such as JAMsj, exhibitions offer more than just the viewing of stagnant artifacts encased in glass or simple intrigue regarding a nostalgic past, they offer significant dissemination of knowledge and the opportunity to evoke connections with cultural identities and heritage development (Ames 1991; Friberg and Huvila 2019; Jules-Rosette and Osborn 2020; Kaufman 2004; Lowenthal 2008; McCracken 2016; Shackel 2004). Contemporary museums are beginning to shift alongside critically reflexive discourse that counters past eroticizing or colonizing practices and utilizes the artifacts they house to foster insight into matters concerning discrimination, social organization, economic disparities, and marginalization (Lyngwa 2022; Macdonald 2022; Ryzewski 2022). In such cases, material culture has become a catalyst from which individuals can (re)interpret communities and populations historically overlooked or oppressed, by providing context into their narratives and lived experiences from their own perspectives.

Building on anthropological theory, one way that cultural institutions effectively mediate the visitor experience is through the curation of object assemblages and their correlating biographies. Objects, much like people, accrue histories and stories over time as they encounter other objects, individuals, and places (Ames 1991; Friberg and Huvila 2019; Joy 2009; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Maggio 2014). When artifacts enter a museum, they come with their own memories attached, and when strategically assembled in relation to other objects, these biographies can coalesce into a collective voice or story for audiences to interpret. This capability of storytelling is what makes the curation of material assemblages crucial to the visitor experience. Although artifacts may tell different stories based on the audience viewing them, their significance and meaning can still be influenced and critiqued by the ways they are curated within a space (Friberg and Huvila 2019; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Jules-Rosette and Osborn 2020; Joy 2009).

Diving Deeper: The Museum

The Japanese American Museum of San Jose (JAMsj) grew initially from a community's desire to preserve neighborhood heritage and local history in the face of continuous redevelopment and urbanization (Fukuda 2014; Nagareda 2017). Founders, and San José locals, spearheaded the grassroots organization by developing educational curriculum through their archival collections and in the procurement of suitable educational spaces for the organization to flourish as growing interest in Japantown's history began to increase (Fukuda 2014).

The building's façade boasts a contemporary spin to traditional *sukiya-zukuri* architecture, a style popularized post-Edo period. The museum houses four primary exhibitions overall: *Old Japantown*, *WWII Incarceration*, the *Agricultural Exhibit*, and the *Traveling Gallery*, with smaller sub-exhibits attached to provide more contextual background in each.

Regardless of the direction museumgoers elect to begin their museum journey, however, they are greeted with an extensive look at the Japanese American diaspora, identity, resettlement, and historical marginalization. Figure 1 details the museum's layout, including the placement of physical partitions that separate exhibition spaces and intricately guide museumgoers along a curated path.

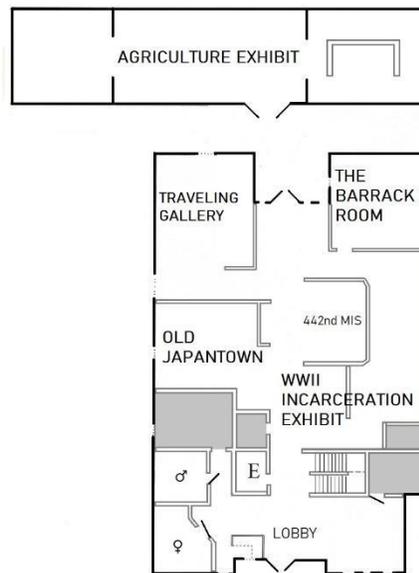


Figure 1. Museum Map

Qualitative Methods

I spent several months collecting ethnographic data through semi-structured interviews with museum affiliates—current staff, former staff, and exhibition collaborators—alongside walking interviews with first-time visitors. Many of my interviewees, namely staff affiliates, were recruited through snowball sampling, wherein other participants referred them to me (McCracken 2003). Docents and former staff who spent the most time working in the galleries or had a hand in exhibit curation were the most recommended or sought out participants by myself and other interviewees. In the end, a total of 17 affiliate interviews were conducted, a majority of

which consisted of participants ranging in age from 40-90 who had either grown up in Japantown or were associated with the museum since its reopening in 2010.

Visitor participants were also recruited through methods of purposive sampling, wherein individuals were selected based on a common criterion: they had never been to the museum before (McCracken 2003). Visitor participants were selected based on maximum variation. Since affiliate participants were of a particular age range and predominantly from Japantown, I tried to select participants who represented a wider range of characteristics and perspectives. Visitor participants ranged from 20-80 years of age and varied in ethnicity, gender identity, and community upbringing (many were raised in the Bay Area, but not explicitly Japantown). As opposed to the sit-down interviews conducted with museum affiliates, I walked visitor interviewees through the exhibition spaces so that I may observe their behaviors and inquire into their experiences and interpretations of the artifacts they encountered. In total, 12 visitor interviews were conducted in this manner.

These interviews elicited information about museum operations, namely assemblage curation, from both internal and external perspectives. These perspectives painted a better, more encompassing understanding of the needs and desires of the museum's primary stakeholders when it came to intended visitor takeaways and exhibit expositions. I further supplemented qualitative data from interviews by conducting participant observation within the exhibition spaces. I examined docent-led tours and visitor behaviors to offer insight into alternating experiences within the museum.

Altogether, I spent a total of seven months utilizing these methodologies in the investigation of JAMsj's collections and community stakeholders. The qualitative data I pulled from interviews, transcripts, and fieldnotes were thematically coded for intersecting areas of

significance—namely attitudes regarding the museum’s collections and curatorial practices. These attitudes were then used to inform a collective needs assessment report for the institution that outlined stakeholder narratives concerning the museum experience and gave insight into how curation impacted storytelling within the exhibitions.

To further assess the theory that object biographies and their amplified narratives—either through text panels or other contextual provisions—could enhance and mediate the visitor experience, I was given the opportunity to apply my investigations into an exhibit development project. This small project proved to be an intrinsic contributor to my understanding of the importance between object biography and human connection and furthered my participation in strengthening those storytelling bonds on behalf of the museum.

Like many of JAMsj’s current on-view collections, little was known about the origin and composition of many of the artworks displayed in the *Incarceration* exhibit. However, useful insight from former staff and evidence within the artwork itself—predominantly in the form of legible signatures or geographic indicators depicted in the pieces—provided some contextual clues from which to build upon. I then took photographs of the artworks in question and held consultation meetings with art historians and specialists at the San Jose Museum of Art to determine the art mediums and techniques used in the pieces. From there, I compared topographical indicators within the artworks with that of the geographic features associated with internment camp sites and I cross referenced signatures (if applicable) with names found in camp registries, many of which were publicly available through government channels. I then utilized the research findings in the creation of a supplemental art catalogue for the museum to use within their *WWII Incarceration* exhibit.

Interpretations and Observation Results

The consensus among staff, affiliates, and visitors was that JAMsj's strongest exhibition space continues to be that concerning incarceration. Supplemented by the Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program (JACS), this exhibit offers careful detail and attentive curation as is evident by the number of catalogued artifacts and informative text panels (Fukuda 2014; Nagareda 2017). The *WWII Incarceration* exhibit provides reflection upon incarceration in an idiosyncratic manner—that is with a focus on authentic, individual experiences—and offers retrospective into the livelihoods of individuals that experienced incarceration.

Affiliates referred to this space as personal and evocative as showcased by the personalized object assemblages focusing on crafts, yearbooks, and everyday remnants salient to the collective camp experience. In relation to this exhibit, museum staff disclosed their collective aspiration for the material culture to resonate with visitors on a deeper, more intimate level. They hoped to provide those with memories of incarceration a chance at reflection, closure, or lamentation and for those unfamiliar with it a chance to understand the sociopolitical impacts in a more nuanced way.

Additionally, the most popular and evocative space in the exhibit among both visitors and staff was the *Barracks Room*, a recreation of a Tule Lake camp living quarters, due to its “visceral” experience and interactive features. When individuals walked into the room, they were confronted with a small quarter filled floor to ceiling with retro household memorabilia. Auditory sensors such as the creaking of floorboards and the crying of infants further contributed to the gloomy and contemplative ambiance of this exhibit's rendition of camp life—encasing the visitor within. For this reason, the *Barracks Room* was cited as the museum highlight for many,

and the most memorable in terms of experience reflection. Visitors attributed this primarily to its dominant interactive impact.

Alternatively, a majority of participants cited the *Old Japantown* exhibit as their least favored space, and unanimously noted its need for future augmentation and expansion. *Old Japantown* emphasizes periods of history relating to early immigration through resettlement post WWII. Artifacts considered reflective of this historic relevance were hand-selected by the institution's staff upon its re-opening to the public in 2010 (Fukuda 2014). As staff rotations occurred over the years, however, little was catalogued or documented in terms of the artifacts currently on the exhibit floor—an overwhelming archival and conservation concern for many of the museum's current staff.

When I asked participants what augmentations, if any, they would make to the exhibits, many affiliates reflected upon the exhibit's need to expand its focus beyond the stories and experiences of Japantown's first- and second-generation immigrants, and to highlight the urbanization of Japantown into a more contemporary narrative and identity. Many participants also voiced their desire to see the museum incorporate narratives outside of the Japanese American experience, perhaps with a focus on Japantown's Filipino and Chinese community that historically left lasting impressions upon the larger locale and immigrant diaspora.

A more significant demand revealed the desire to incorporate more female narratives into the exhibition spaces, citing that most of the artifacts on display appear intricately linked to male success stories, livelihoods, and hardships, despite women being equally foundational and present for many of the same triumphs and tribulations. This is not especially surprising, considering the historical exclusion of women in the archaeological record and the subsequent glossing over of female narratives within museums (Cowie 2019). As many participants in this

study presented as female, they were especially cognizant of the museum's gendered artifacts and predominantly male-based storytelling.

For visitors, *Old Japantown* lacked context due to the dubious nature of the artifact on display. Missing text panels and object histories formulated gaps in the overarching narrative of the exhibit, which many visitors said hindered their capacity to fully interpret them. Although visitors can fill-in interpretations of objects on their own based on their own experiences, many visitors simply didn't know what some of the artifacts were which disallowed them from formulating interpretations altogether.

In some cases, these gaps could have been alleviated should guests opt to take docent-led tours, where docents verbally provide contextual—and often personalized—information regarding the artifacts. Docent-led tours often provided visitors with new forms of interaction with the artifacts on display, allowing them to explore prominent milieus that would otherwise be hidden should they move about the exhibit space in a self-guided manner. However, as observations demonstrated, not all visitors elected to take a docent tour. This was the case with several of my visitor participants who suggested their desire for a solitary experience gave them more independence to interpret and interact with the spaces around them. Even so, without supplemental text panels and contextual information available on the pieces, visitors noted a disconnect between their unaccompanied experience and that of understanding object significance in relation to an overarching theme or story. This was particularly the case in the *Old Japantown* exhibit, as seen reflected in the shorter retention times amongst visitors, as opposed to the *Incarceration exhibit* or the *Agricultural exhibit*.

In regard to the art catalogue deliverable, results found that the supplemental information provided via the catalogue enhanced visitor retention and understanding of the artworks on

display. Prior to the addition of the catalogue in the display, neither observed visitors nor docent-led tours would stop at the art wall for longer than a few seconds. Visitor interviewees would later state that they assumed the art had something to do with incarceration due to the nature of their subject material, but past that point couldn't quite make a further connection. After the implementation of the catalogue in the exhibit, however, several visitors noted that the supplemental text material provided for them a more nuanced view into the artists and gave the artwork the human connection it had priorly been missing.

Consequences of Curation

A primary concern for many museum stakeholders is the dissemination of knowledge and cultural reflection through some form of narrative or storytelling. Artifacts and their assemblages can be prominent storytellers in this undertaking as, much like people, they have histories and formulate intimate connections with various individuals with whom they come into contact (Ames 1999; Friberg and Huvila 2019; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Kaufman 2004; Humphries and Smith 2014; Maggio 2014; Shackel 2004). The impermanence of artifacts gives them value as storytellers of their time and makes them coveted by historians and archaeologists (Gosden and Marshall 1999; Kaufman 2004; Lowenthal 2008; Maggio 2014). However, any disconnect between artifacts and overall narrative within an exhibition space produces a message that is foggy or disjointed (Friberg and Huvila 2019; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Lowenthal 2008; Maggio 2014; Parezo 1987).

In relation to JAMsj, this dissonance is not so much a concern for exhibitions relating to incarceration or agriculture. In these exhibits, the topic is clear and many of the physical objects have a thematic tie or sense of unity. Artifacts in the *WWII Incarceration* exhibit offer links to oral narratives and provide contextual, personal backgrounds through supplementary text panels.

Further interpretation occurs when curators employ the usage of storerooms as exhibition spaces, such as the case with the museum's *Agricultural* exhibit and *Barracks Room*. In these cases, visible storage offered interactive possibilities between artifacts and museumgoers (Jules-Rosette and Osborn 2020).

This was not the case, however, with *Old Japantown*. Rather both visitors and docents admitted to feeling disconnected with the narrative of the exhibit. Of course, these “gaps” in knowledge can be rectified, in part, by the incorporation of text panels/placards or the implementation of QR codes that situate the artifacts in association with Japantown's identity. However, as many affiliates and staff have pointed out, many of the artifacts currently on display remain in enigmatic stagnation, as their acquisition history is unknown.

Lack of systematic documentation, factored alongside an expeditious transitional period of the museum's collections upon reopening in 2010, have resulted in an understandable quandary when it comes to the artifacts on display and their lack of textual descriptions. Increasing costs and rapid expansion are two dominant factors that can create significant curatorial pressure on institutions when it comes to their material collections (Friberg and Huvila 2019).

At the time of writing, JAMsj was undergoing the arduous process of archiving its collections, connecting artifacts with collected oral histories, and sorting through a large influx of artifact donations. As the institution's staff is predominantly voluntary, there were simply not enough workers to undergo these procedures, let alone lead investigations into the origins of pre-existing artifacts on display or the redesign of current exhibit spaces. For most museums, the curatorial team is normally charged with these roles and responsibilities, but for a small, grassroots institution such as JAMsj, the museum struggles to fill in these roles—despite the

current hardworking efforts of its Collections Committee who dedicate their time undertaking laborious archiving and donation sorting. These factors have evolved into what several staff members referred to as a “curation crisis”, or an uneasy imbalance between the institutions’ rate of growth in their archaeological collections and the resources allocated for proper curation (Friberg and Huvila 2019).

Steps in Cultural Heritage Management

The theory regarding object biography as an imperative factor in the successful mediation of visitor interpretation was sufficiently corroborated throughout the duration of this project. When object biographies were transparent in exhibition spaces, stakeholders made note of their heightened resonance and connection to those spaces. Such was the case with the *Incarceration* exhibit and the situational augmentation concerning the exhibit’s internment artworks. Alternatively, in scenarios where object biographies were misaligned, under-documented, or absent altogether, there was a significant shift in visitor retention and dissonance.

To rectify these gaps in curation, methods in which the museum could circumvent these barriers without financial strain or workforce concerns were evaluated in the form of a needs assessment report from which collaborative, consultative input from visitors and museum affiliates were addressed. The primary objective was to accumulate all ethnographic data into formatting a toolkit from which the museum could potentially construct a more immediate plan of action concerning their gallery spaces and operationalization based on stakeholder input and exhibition-based exigencies such as resource allocation and funding.

One potential solution to the museum’s “curation crisis” is the implementation of a rotational artifact system. In addition to being far less laborious than entire exhibit rotations,

rotational pull of artifacts would also alleviate concerns regarding conservation and preservation of the museum's heritage resources (Ames 2015; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Rotenberg 2014). Due to limited funding, staffing, and physical restrictions, JAMsj does not have a current space dedicated to the conservation of their donations. As objects have varying rates of decay and impermanence, environmental factors have foreseeable consequences on deterioration and degradation. In the absence of conservation-based instruments such as climate-controlled facilities, glass protection, or chemical treatments, artifact rotation can be a beneficial yet paramount method in confronting preservation concerns.

Another suggestion I urged for was the addition of text panels or QR codes alongside artifacts, especially those that visitors had difficulty distinguishing. This would also confront accessibility concerns for visitors that opt to have a solitary museum experience. This would be fundamental in both increasing artifact conservation efforts within the museum and enhancing the institution's inclusivity to hidden populations of individuals, such as those who are seeing impaired or are not native English or Japanese speakers.

I also proposed the implementation of an institutional feedback system in my report and suggested the utilization of methods such as staff surveys in addition to visitor comment cards to further open the lines of stakeholder communication and cultivate future institutional goals based on the feedback received. A feedback system, either through the implementation of frequent advisory board meetings or DEAI workshops, would facilitate communication between departments that staff seek, keeping the lines of collaborative consultation open for future curational project initiatives and enhancing institutional inclusivity.

For instance, of the primary concerns that arose within this project regarding curation and exhibition highlights, aside from under documentation, was the elevation of voices and stories

relating to women—those of which have been historically underrepresented and silenced in many cultural institutions. JAMsj has been fortunate in that, since its inception, women have been at the forefront of museum operations, community building, and the dissemination of educational knowledge. However, their narratives within the exhibition spaces have been historically intertwined, and, in some cases, completely overshadowed by their male counterparts. This is reflected in many of the material artifacts showcased on display that either reference the male experience, or recount primarily male narratives. By displaying artifacts that harbor object biographies connected to female narratives, and by further consulting with female affiliates and community members in the curational process, JAMsj can circumvent the perpetuation of dominant male stories.

As an important, community-based museum, JAMsj is aware of the crucial role it plays in addressing and representing the milieus of Japanese American contribution in the Bay Area. Additionally, the institution is further tasked with fostering representational, collective identity that would seek to fortify continuities with future generations. This is especially important to those that wish to preserve Japantown's unique and multivocal history. As this empirical research project shows, the museum can, and has addressed these themes prominently in the past, but can stand to uplift their material assemblages in such a way that cultivates further resonance with their visitor experience. This is especially important considering the omissions of narratives relating to Asian Americans in the field of heritage and cultural resource management.

Concluding Discussion

I came into this project with the intention of examining the extent to which the museum utilizes their collections in mediation with the visitor experience. This project further assisted the museum in the discovery of “gaps” within its internal infrastructure, limiting its outreach with

potential visitors and stakeholders, and opened necessary discourse relating to collaborative-based curational projects and equitable communication. This project highlighted areas for future augmentation concerning design and development efforts within exhibition spaces, in addition to foregrounding current methods of curatorship in the exploration of object biographies in storytelling endeavors. In all, this project assisted JAMsj in the identification of methods from which museum staff can strategically employ the institutions material assemblages as cultural tools to connect with museumgoers and further supplied museum management with necessary documentation regarding the interrelationships between curated narratives and stakeholder interpretations.

Chapter 3: *Broader Impacts and Applied Anthropological Insight*

This chapter serves as a reflection on project outcomes, aims, and encountered limitations in terms of research and development. Furthermore, I discuss future implications of people-centered museology and the importance of community collaboration in prospective project initiatives following my own. During this project, I witnessed how seemingly simple objects could connect deeply and intimately on residential nostalgia regarding migrant/immigrant experiences. I further witnessed how imperative proper curatorial consideration plays on an individual's experience and ability to articulate nuanced stories and propagate future discourse. I also learned that it is often impossible to separate museums, or the disciplines of anthropology or archaeology for that matter, from pervasive issues regarding race, cultural erasure, discrimination, inequality, accessibility, and politics.

Outcomes and Key Findings

In partnering with the Japanese American Museum of San Jose, I came to see the institution as a physical symbol of continuity and perseverance—that of which is reflected in the spirit of Japantown's community identity and civic autonomy. As a grassroots organization, the museum hinges on the investment of impassioned volunteers for most of its organizational procedures, including that of curation and artifact archiving. These volunteers are the primary lynchpin of JAMsj's institutional engagement, outreach, and visibility—an onerous task considering that many of these fields fall within the jurisdiction of full-time employees.

I was quite surprised then, during my investigations, in the sheer number of individuals wishing to consult with me concerning augmentative suggestions and inputs regarding exhibition development and enhancing inclusivity within the institution throughout all levels of the museum

hierarchy. When probed further, it became clear that many of my participants had not been asked to contribute their discernments in the past and expressed frustrations regarding organization-wide communication in the past. Of these participants included members of JAMsj's Advisory Board, members of the Board of Directors, former directors, former founders, docents, managers, members of the collections committee, etc.

My project findings heavily insinuated that there were “gaps” in memory within certain exhibition spaces—due to the dubiety of artifacts on the floor—that hindered an individual's capacity to further interpret those pieces, and thus resonate with the exhibit storyline. These “gaps” in interpretation could be expounded upon should a visitor elect to participate in a docent-led tour, but in the cases that they do not these pieces exist in a state of suspended ambiguity. When they remain so, their collective narrative/story in which artifacts work in coalescence to provide risks endangerment—resulting disassociation as an untoward consequence.

These “gaps” in artifact narratives have little to do with uninterest in particular stories or objects, rather extensive under-documentation in terms of archiving and generational separation has been the main culprit. When the museum was first assembled upon re-opening in 2010 to the public, the Board of Directors at the time underwent an understandably pressured time crunch to organize exhibition spaces and select what they deemed to be exemplary artifacts in historic and cultural identity-based representation. However, over time, non-documentation regarding artifact donations and cataloging resulted in eventual mystification about artifact origins or local importance—exacerbated further once older staff retired or passed on, taking their knowledge with them.

Now, the museum houses a surplus of artifacts, and the Board of Directors has moved on to new hands. Yet there is a hesitancy to incite changes in the exhibitions due to matters

concerning archiving, disconnected communication, and a desire to hold onto traditionalism in honor of the prominent figures in the museum's inception. This is not to say, however, that there lacks completely those who harbor and foster knowledge regarding the building's history or the significance of particular artifacts, yet those individuals are not always consulted or asked to contribute their insight when it comes to making internal changes in the institution.

It became abundantly clear, through my investigations, that a need for better, more open internal communication and feedback was needed if JAMsj was to make any progressive changes—whether that be in terms of grant funding allocation, archiving, or the eventual augmentation of gallery spaces. One such suggestion made upon completion of my needs assessment was the reinstatement of more conclusive roles within the museum's Advisory Board—that of which consists primarily of former members from the Board of Directors. Members of the Advisory Board were extensively praised by affiliates and community members, not just for their contributions to the museum, but for their contributions to the greater Japantown community.

However, upon consultation, many participants simultaneously felt as though the Advisory Board was being severely underutilized. Communication concerns within the internal museum level validated these claims. If the museum could find the means to regulate the roles and responsibilities of their Advisory Board members, giving them more conclusive functions and opening the channels of communication internally, they would see a significant shift in both operation and in filling those “gaps” in knowledge necessary for developing archiving procedures and enhancing much-needed documentation to uplift the stories of their collections and effectively connect with their stakeholders on a deeper level.

Why Anthropology?

Contemporary museums require a cultural reset due to outdated methods of curation, entailing a more people-centered museology with a focus on the intimate relationships between human stakeholders and their material culture (Ames 1991; Ames 2015; Dubrow 2000, Johnson 2019; Kaufman 2004; Magi and Lepik 2019; Parezo 1987). In this project, for instance, the goal was to assist in fostering those connections between institution, artifact, and community, in advocating for a more consultative, community-based research process in curation. Fostering more cohesive outreach and consultation procedures through collective initiatives can promote representation in a direction that many contemporary museums are striving for—that is, away from extant controversy concerning cultural “trespassing” and the appropriation of marginalized and misrepresented communities that has, for too long, marred the field of museum studies and anthropology in the past.

In the greater field of cultural resource management (CRM), historical archaeology and anthropology can (and should) be further tasked with advocacy for historically marginalized voices. Furthermore, anthropologists and archaeologists are becoming increasingly more cognizant of the importance of involving stakeholders in project initiatives, practices, and policies relating to the management of heritage resources such as artifacts within cultural repositories (Ames 1991; Alivizatou 2012; Kaufman 2004; Ryzewski 2022; Shackel 2004). Anthropology is no longer seen as the simple implementation of scientific methods in the accumulation and interpretation of raw data, rather contemporary anthropologists are becoming more committed to the notion that communities know about and interpret their own pasts, imbuing them with their own meanings, and would thus require/want to be part of the decision-

making process regarding their own heritage development and material culture management (Ames 1991; Kaufman 2004; Lowenthal 2008; Ryzewski 2022; Rotenberg 2014; Shackel 2004).

Moreover, the discipline of anthropology is in a position to assist communities in important advocacy initiatives, and in the construction of open-dialogue beneficial to the operationalization of many cultural institutions, including museums whose own past has been haunted by colonization and controversy (Ames 2006; Ames 2015; Mixter and Henry 2017; Shackel 2004). For places connected to contested histories of conflict and trauma, such was the case with JAMsj, anthropology can also serve as an instrument for advantageous, therapeutic dialogues that invite stakeholders, both within the Japantown community and those outside of it, to acknowledge past and present injustices involving discrimination and cultural bigotry (Fukuda 2014; Ryzewski 2022). Anthropologists themselves, come equipped with the ethnographic toolkit necessary to approach these otherwise sensitive topics and bring them to the forefront in constructive discussion.

To follow this progression within the discipline, my project aimed to empower hidden populations of stakeholders and incorporate them in the decision-making process, guiding us one step closer towards the people-centered museology celebrated in the field of museum anthropology. Projects like this—incorporating stakeholder participation in dialogue and discourse regarding management and the showcasing of cultural heritage resources and artifact mediation—is a prominent way from which anthropology can become an integral part of a community's narrative. Additionally, it allows the discipline to be more accessible to stakeholders outside of academia, further developing the discipline into a field that is more socially relevant (Shackel 2004).

As this project has illustrated, the processes and outcomes of stakeholder-involved consultation in anthropological investigation extends beyond that of academia. Rather, community-based anthropology projects hold the capability to inspire stakeholders into action, into heritage advocacy, into leading their own narratives and raising historical consciousness of past traumas and inequalities.

Project Limitations

When a researcher reflects on past case studies and projects conducted, it is not uncommon to muse what one would have changed, whether it be in terms of project design, implementation, or approach. It is also not uncommon to kick oneself over hindsight being 20/20, as there are often pitfalls and limitations to project research that fall outside of one's own control. This was certainly the case when it came to my own project working with JAMsj, especially in terms of accessibility and limited documentation.

To gain a better understanding of the museum, and the Japantown community at large, I employed extensive archival research and conducted a rather vast literature review utilizing local publications on Japantown, JARC newsletters, and online databases such as the Japanese American History Archives (JAHA) or Nikkei. Although most of my research expounded upon local history and museum inception, there was very little literature available about the museum itself. Furthermore, as under-documentation proved, there was also very little information relating to artifact catalogues or databases which hindered my capability of assisting significantly with the archives. My contribution to the *Incarceration Exhibit*, wherein artworks were identified and assessed, inferred mainly from collaboration with the San Jose Museum of Art (SJMA) in the identification of art mediums and techniques and digital detective work within federal databases locating and correlating camp registries.

To bypass these barriers, this project relied heavily on data collected from oral histories and visitor accounts, in addition to a considerable number of observation hours within the collections. These oral timelines and historical records, however, were also impeded by the museum's difficult transitional periods which served to not only inhibit internal lines of communication, but further propagated the difficulty in record-keeping. This also made for a difficult adjustment in terms of participant outreach. As mentioned previously, during the duration of my project 3 separate executive directors served under the span of seven months. This, paired with arduous adjustments in terms of scheduling, made it increasingly more difficult to outreach to various members of the museum community or formulate a solid research agenda. Flexibility was a key attribute in these circumstances, especially when attempting to balance such a consultative project with that of work and other program precedence.

Another difficult feat was participant involvement altogether. When I initially cultivated my interview protocols, it was my intention to interview relatively the same ratio of visitor informants to that of affiliates. However, I soon learned this was exceedingly difficult to organize. When word spread that an anthropology student was conducting needs assessment research at the museum, affiliates and staff flocked to be interviewed, propelled by an interesting snow-ball sampling affect and all wanting to contribute their own input into the project findings and outcomes. It came to a point where affiliate interviews had to eventually be delimited to adhere to a feasible research timeline. Alternatively, visitors were particularly hard to find—especially as my participant focus was on those who had yet to visit the museum to assist in the facilitation of their first impressions upon visitation. Scheduling conflicts, saturation in terms of visitor diversity, and community outreach proved rather difficult in allocating participants that

met these prerequisites. In the end, I had a substantial number of affiliate interviews and transcriptions, about double the amount opposed to my cognitive visitor interviews.

Space and funding were also a huge concern for the museum and was brought up quite frequently throughout this project's duration, which informed whether future augmentation would be feasible at any prospective interval. At the time this report was written, JAMsj was working in collaboration with local preservationists on the Kawakami House Project which aimed to allocate funding in the conservation and renovation of the Kawakami House, a historic home adjacent to the museum. This project could potentially open doors in terms of enhancing archival space and dedicating an area to the proper conservation of JAMsj's material assemblages (JAMsj n.d.). However, without further grant acquirement, this project is a reality many years in the making.

If this research project was to be utilized to inform future projects in a similar field of museum anthropology and community-based collaboration, I would urge researchers to take my limitations and drawbacks into account.

The Future of JAMsj

At the end of each interview, I asked participants what they hoped to see for JAMsj's future. In this regard, the overwhelming sentiment presented a picture of an intimate, borderless institution open to possibilities and development, whilst simultaneously nurturing its own historic roots and preserving the prominent stories of its stakeholders and collaborators. In this mission, I believe the museum is exceptionally capable. During my many months of investigation, I have witnessed the growth in which JAMsj embraces, spearheaded by

passionately devoted community members. I have also observed the ways the museum has, and can continue to, impact the lives and thoughts of those who come through its doors.

For me, JAMsj is a museum small in size, but big in heart. Yet many parts of its story remain incomplete, awaiting proper visibility and the enhancement of its unique narratives within. Although limitations and difficult transitional periods have impeded the museum in the past, the institution is more than capable of utilizing the assets it currently has on hand to make advantageous changes and improvements. In the end, what we know about Japantown comes from the intimate relaying of stories and experiences from those that experienced its history, firsthand. However, as the *Issei* and *Nissei* of our Japanese American population pass on, it is through their material remains, within JAMsj, that their narratives continue to thrive.

This is what makes the preservation efforts at JAMsj so imperative to the elevation of historic narratives and their correlating cultural identities. Moreover, JAMsj is in a good positionality, as a cultural institution, to facilitate the difficult conversations regarding trauma, immigration, discrimination, and urbanization. In social science, the roles museums play in the display and representation of material culture is essential in the interpretation behind the everyday lives of communities that have been historically overlooked or intentionally ignored (Ames; 1999; Dubrow 2000; Lowenthal 2008; Ryzewski 2022; Takaragawa 2022). As a site of significant Japanese American importance in displaying history and cultivating community identity, JAMsj stands as an advocate amidst community-centered museums for a population under-recognized and marginalized in America's past. Therefore, how they upkeep, uplift and represent their material assemblages and their correlating biographies are especially important.

In my own perspective, this collaborative anthropology project has also taught me a considerable amount about my own self, my own biases, and my own role as an applied

anthropologist. From the beginning of this project to its end, I learned a considerable number of lessons regarding the *how tos* on conducting collaborative, ethnographic research. Moreover, I have discovered a deeper passion for utilizing my skillset as an anthropologist in the advocacy for marginalized or underrepresented stakeholders within museums and within the broader realm of heritage management.

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Appendix A: JAMsj Needs Assessment Excerpts¹

I. Needs Assessment Introduction

Throughout this project, I aimed to identify the ways the museum strategically employs its collections as cultural tools to connect with its stakeholders, and to utilize my findings in the documentation of the interrelationships between curated narratives and public interpretations.

To examine this evidence, I spent 5-6 months collecting extensive ethnographic data through over 60+ hours of semi-structured interviews with both affiliates of the museum and cognitive (walking) interviews with first-time visitors. Cognitive interviews, in this case, differ from semi-structured interview processes, in that visitors were walked through the exhibition spaces and invited to talk about the museum and the collections at their own pace, cumulating in a brief semi-structured interview at the end of their visit regarding their experiences. These collective interviews and ethnographies were supported alongside methods of participant observation in which docent-led tours were examined in addition to visitor behaviors within the exhibition spaces.

The following Needs Assessment report outlines 7 months of extensive investigation into JAMsj's intimate collections and community. Provided in this report is insight into the narratives, concerns, and suggestions of JAMsj's stakeholders—comprising of staff, affiliates, and visitors—alongside a list of recommended actions and resources for the museum to utilize and implement in feasible future action plans.

¹ Excerpt taken from JAMsj's Needs Assessment Report, authored by myself and for internal circulation only.

Appendix B: Participant Highlights²

I. On Feeling Connected to the Collections

Visitor: [Referring to the *WWII Incarceration* exhibit] *“Although I didn’t experience anything remotely similar to this, I feel like I can connect as a fellow immigrant.”*

Visitor: *“It’s a walk down memory lane....and memory lanes beyond my own memory.”*

Affiliate: *“To have an exhibit about the camps was very significant to me. Because this is something that, I’ve been involved in fighting for—to have more clear public education about what happened to Japanese Americans. And to sort of see that my parents’ generation were able to help create this, and they were involved in giving voice to this, was very meaningful.”*

II. On Feeling Detached from the Collections

Visitor: *“I feel like I was missing a lot of context here and there. But I really like the thought behind it. I think it has a lot of potential in providing more context into Japanese Americans outside of their dark history period in America.”*

Affiliate: *“**Old Japantown** only represents a narrow slice of experience, it focuses on a very specific Japanese American experience, but may leave out a lot of other generational stories important to the collective culture of this community.”*

² Quotations pulled from JAMsj’s Needs Assessment Report.

Visitor: *“I think as a 4th generation Japanese American, I look at the Incarceration artifacts and feel like ‘wow, this is an important narrative to carry on’, but at the same time, I sometimes want more. More beyond just incarceration. I want to see the successes of my ancestors, not just the trials and tribulations.”*

Visitor: *“I feel like I’m not ‘in the know’. This stuff seems important, but without context I’m not sure why. Maybe it’s because I’m a woman, and these objects seem catered towards telling a man’s perspective. Or maybe it’s because I didn’t grow up here in Japantown, so I don’t have nostalgia or recognition for some of these pieces.”*

III. Addressing Augmentation

Affiliate: *“Historical context would help. It would still show, the kind of celebratory struggle of Japanese American history. I understand why you have to do that—it’s a heritage thing. But it’s also important to put it in a broader context saying: “you know, we’re really not that different from anyone else in terms of immigration, or in terms of all these political battles, but we do have specific stories to tell that we think will really help people, no matter who they are, from wherever they are from”. To get something important out of it.... That’s the message of this museum. You know, it’s not just a general history museum, it’s not just a museum about the city of San Jose. It’s a neighborhood museum. It’s a community. It has some very particular stories to tell that we think can really help people understand, no matter where they are from, the history of our country and important social issues.”*

Affiliate: *“I want us to fulfill the destiny of the items we have. They are meant to be shared, not stored in a closet.”*

Visitor: *“It appears to be a generational museum. The artifacts all appear from a specific generation or older. I don’t recognize many of these things I see, and I don’t know why they are important. I think touching on history is important, but I would like to see the museum connect with their contemporary generations more too. I would love to know more about Japantown now, and the culture of today’s Japanese American populations.”*

Visitor: *“I think what they have here is good, but I want to see stories about my mom, or my grandmother. Not specifically, of course, but as a museum that represents history, I think it should incorporate more female stories. I see a lot of men in these halls, and I’m so sick of only hearing about men. History has only ever focused on men.”*

Affiliate: *“We are a neighborhood museum. I want it to feel like a safe, inclusive space, where people can connect on some form, any form, of personal level with our collections.”*

Appendix C: Internment Wall Extract³



Takaki Sam Morimoto (b. 1902)
Untitled, n.d.
Watercolor and Chinese Black Ink on Cold-Press Paper
(Description: Fence line at Camp Tulelake, CA)

Suiko Mikami (b. 1902 - 98)
Untitled, November 29, 1943
Watercolor with Chinese Ink (Sumi-e) on Cold-Press Paper
(Description: Camp blocks at either Tulelake, CA, or Topaz, UT)



Chiura Obata (b. 1885 – 1974)
Untitled, n.d.
Watercolor w/ Chinese Ink (Sumi-e) on Cold-Press Paper
(Description: Blocks and Mountain-scape with figures in foreground at unknown location)

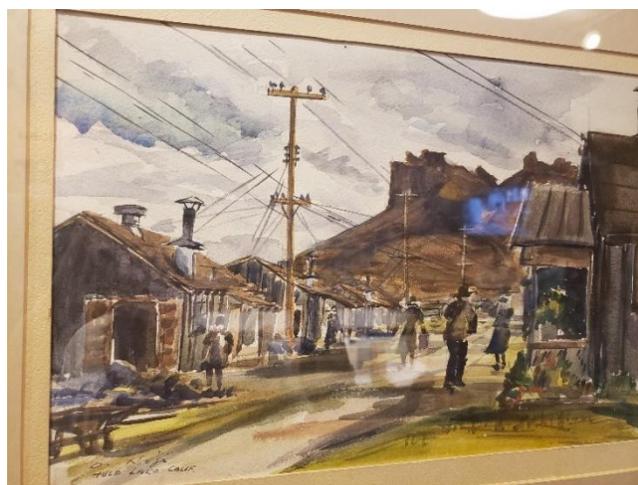
³ Artwork courtesy of JAMsj. Pictures taken by me (Cibella). Text work compiled by Gordon Smith and myself.



Suiko Mikami (b. 1902 - 98)
Untitled, February, 1945
Sumi-e on Hot-Press Paper (original)
(Description: Barracks in the winter at Camp Tulelake, CA)

**NOTE: This is a print of an original

Oliver K. Noji (b. 1904)
Tule Lake Calif., n.d.
Watercolor on Cold-Press Paper
(Description: Busy block neighborhood at Camp Tulelake, CA)



Takaki Sam Morimoto (b. 1902)
Untitled, June 19, 1945
Oil on Canvas
(Description: Block road at unknown location, possibly Tulelake, CA)



堀田高廣 (Hotta, Takahiro), (b. 1928)
Untitled, September 18, 1944
Watercolor on Cold-Press Paper
(Description: Blocks and electric lines at Camp
Tulelake, CA)

J. Miyauchi (1888-1984)
Heart Mountain, 1943
Tempera (?) on Canvas
(Description: Barracks at Heart Mountain, WY)



Appendix D: Museum Photos⁴



Museum Exterior



⁴ All photos taken by me (Cibella) with permission from JAMsj to utilize in my report.

Gallery Entrance



WWII Incarceration Exhibit



The Barracks Room



442nd MIS Exhibit



Old Japantown Exhibit



Agriculture Exhibit