Selected Poets' Lived Experience of the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* Project:

A Phenomenological Study of Meaning and Essence

By

Nadine Lynn Lanier

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Graduate Supervisory Committee;

Heather Maring, Chair
Mark Lussier
Sarah Amira de la Garza

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ABSTRACT

Selected Poets' Lived Experience of the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* Project: A Phenomenological Study of Meaning and Essence addresses a specific public art project. Public art has a long history of eluding a definition of consensus, and it continues to do so. There is very little in the way of accountability for its effect, and most of what is available is anecdotal. The *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* (*SAS*) is no exception in that no follow-ups were ever asked of the community, even though the Melrose Neighborhood District has been revitalized and rescued from its decline with the inception of *SAS*. It brought residents and business owners together in coordination with the City of Phoenix and Arizona State University to create the unique infrastructure of *SAS* that presents itself as a sheltered bus stop/outdoor gallery displaying art and poetry on large platform panels to the delight of the citizenry.

The purpose of this study was to explore, describe, and interpret the meaning given to the Seventh Avenue Streetscape by poets who participated in that project. The central question guiding the research was "What is the essential meaning and understanding of the lived experience given by poets who participated in the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* project and its creation?"

The study was conducted through the qualitative research tradition, guided specifically by the theoretical base known as phenomenology. Phenomenology lends itself particularly well to the study of phenomena such as *SAS* as its focus is finding the essential in the "everyday" through the expression of lived experience. My primary data source were the poets themselves, those whose poems had been selected to be publicly presented. Once cleared by the Institutional Review Board, my method of data collection

involved one-on-one recorded interviews. The interviews were then transcribed and subjected to various methods of data reduction, including coding and themeing the data from the thick description given by the poet-participants. The data revealed patterns among the poets which could be divided into six essential themes, confirming a plausible description and interpretation of *SAS*. Recommendations included conducting the same study again with the remaining qualifying *SAS* poets and comparing the results.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to My Parents, Nicholas John and Margaret Jean.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude to Heather Maring who stepped in and became my chair when I thought all was lost. Her guidance and support helped me to feel confident while exploring areas she suggested outside or beyond my purview. She made the whole of the dissertation process possible for me. I also could not have moved forward without my committee members. Sarah Amira de la Garza brought me into a world of rigor in qualitative academic research and accepted the role of PI toward my IRB approval; she still challenges me to go further, and that's a compliment. Mark Lussier somehow made the intellectual process of reading dense material "fun"; he introduced me to Michel de Certeau, which circuitously led me to my theoretical-methodological framework in phenomenology as the foundation for my study.

Cathy Cullicott, a fellow doctoral traveler, was the voice of practicality. Without her, I would still be navigating the IRB application form, and my dissertation would have reached a thousand pages. A shout-out to my cousin Carolyn Breen all the way in New Jersey; a cheerleader in high school, she eventually earned her PhD, and became my own eleventh-hour cheerleader (this past year), pushing me onward. Rhonda Pruitt was my ASU counselor, but wore every hat imaginable—giving me advice, support, value, and time. Rosemarie Dombrowski, my accountability partner in rhyme, has been my loyal and constant friend before, during, and I expect, after graduation. Special thanks to Sheila Luna who saw me through all things procedural (and more) ever since I began my MA with the English department in 1991. Sincere thanks to Brock Henderson who suggested I return to school when I was at a crossroads; he has always been my person of last resort.

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Finally, I thank everyone who has helped me in some way, even if unnamed—librarians, technical support, the graduate college—and ASU in all ways and always.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I am close to turning five and can't read yet, so along with picture books, images—especially large, oversized images such as found on indoor movie screens or outdoor billboards—tug at me to stare obsessively and then to file them away like snapshots stored inside myself. I remember the vast sandscape in the film *Lawrence of Arabia* or the equally arid desert stretching from the far left of the theater screen to the far right during the opening credits of Eastwood's early spaghetti westerns. Those I can conjure up if needed, but there is another that is always present in my mental storehouse: the Sherwin-Williams tipped paint can spilling bright red liquid over the planet, covering half and still dripping. I am in my Auntie Annie's car and somewhat carsick, as always, when we take these rides in warm weather, breathing exhaust fumes while stuck in city traffic—and there it is, rising above on some kind a metal scaffolding in Elizabeth, New Jersey. The giant can, the spilling paint, the red . . . the red and the words I cannot read become part of the picture imprinted on me in that intersection of automobiles and smog, circa 1960. I don't understand it as an ad so much as a cosmic message, something from beyond this world as the cannister hovers above, and its content covers the globe. Sixty years later, the "Cover the Earth" paint campaign still has an impact on me as a billboard, and by association, the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* (*SAS*) becomes my passion.

Of course, it was several decades later before *SAS* would become a public art reality. By that time, I was a practicing painter determined to be a poet. A lyric poet. Therefore, in 2007, I remember how excited I was when I heard about the City of Phoenix's "Call for Submissions" for a public art project involving large panels; it was

soliciting both poets and artists. A few years prior, in 2003, there was a "Call for Artists," but now the *SAS* was including the literary arts along with the visual. It appeared as a major turning point in the world of local public art, at least that is how many poets in Arizona saw it. To some of us, the opportunity was akin to a Broadway actor's chance to see his or her name up in lights, and I wanted that for myself. Though the panels were much smaller than a highway billboard, the poems remain standing for an entire year, maybe more, to be read by those passing through "The Curve" of the Melrose District, a centrally located, historic neighborhood in Phoenix.

The project was unique because instead of presenting the usual "occasional" poem for an event by a known writer, it gave emerging poets a venue for self-expression: Public art was advancing to include the writings of local poets; however, the *SAS* was unique even before it included poetry. First, the project incorporated the art panels themselves as part of the initial infrastructure—they were built into the original design plan instead of added on to it. Second, the art exhibited, from its inception, was meant to be a rotational, much like a gallery—an outdoor gallery—rather than a permanent installation. Third, it demanded community involvement from residents and businesses at such a level that it could be argued the end result created a "placemaking" destination and a reversal of an economic misfortune toward a revitalization for the neighborhoods involved.

My study explored the phenomenon of the *lived* experience of poets who successfully navigated the submission process for the *SAS* public art project, resulting in their poems being chosen for display in the central Phoenix neighborhood infrastructure bus stop/outdoor gallery installation. The information obtained, once analyzed, gave

insight into the poets' essential and contextual meaning of the *SAS,* leading to a better understanding of artists' perspectives in order to inform future public art practice. Heideggerian hermeneutical/interpretive phenomenology was the methodology used to examine the phenomenon in question as its research goal was finding meaning through extracting evocative (thick) description embedded in the situation under examination (van Manen 18-19). Ten participants were selected from the original group of twenty-five poets whose works were exhibited through the *SAS* project over last decade in which poetry was included.

This introductory chapter gives an overview of the study's context and background, followed by the problem statement, purpose statement, and aligned research questions (a more in-depth history of the *Streetscape* is found in Chapter 2), and a brief description of the philosophy and methodology (covered in detail in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively), along with my perspectives and assumptions as researcher. It concludes with the rationale and significance of the research, a summary of each chapter, plus a list of key terms used throughout the study.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

A detailed, historical background of Melrose and the *SAS* are found in the next chapter; however, a contextual snapshot can be summed up in this way: Melrose, formerly a wild and fast surface-street thoroughfare in a declining neighborhood with an unusual curvature and more than the usual number of taming stoplights at its intersections, is now home to the *SAS*—designated bus stops complete with canopies to protect transit passengers from the elements, lights for night safety, and art panels for a cultural experience—in a LGBTQ-friendly neighborhood identified by colorful banners

urging “Shop the Curve” along with a welcoming, place-named entry arch. This public art project continues evolving to accommodate the needs and goals of this particular locale in many ways—from developing an identity and sense of place to fostering social change—with a paradigm shift over the last forty years toward urban regeneration. In fact, Melrose was on it way toward the sometimes disparaged state of gentrification until growth halted in 2020 due to Covid-19.

Melrose became an image of success through public art, specifically the *SAS.* In fulfilling the four divisions of positive public art impact as determined by Jack Becker, founder and artistic director of FORECAST Public Artworks, *SAS* became the pathway through which successful neighborhood renewal and community development was achieved. In fact, Lisa Huggins-Hubbard, former Neighborhood Specialist with the Neighborhood Services Department, goes as far as to say that the art panels/shade canopies (public art) “started it all, created that destination” (Huggins-Hubbard).

The proof of *SAS* following Becker’s four field observations of public art influences is shown in its historical evolution, even if done without conscious knowledge[1] of his categories. Did the *Streetscape* fulfill these four determining factors of successful public art, leading to the development and revitalization of a formerly deteriorating neighborhood? Clearly, the answer is “Yes.” Many of the participating residents and business owners who were present at the inception of an absolute threshold of intolerance of the neighborhood’s downturn had a desire to evolve economically and culturally, and they agree with Huggins-Hubbard that the art panel/shade canopy started

[1] Vaughan-Brubaker, former Public Art Project Manager for the City of Phoenix Office Arts and Culture, said he knew of Becker’s theories regarding accessibility and process, but they didn’t specifically inform the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* or provide an intention, except perhaps subconsciously.

it all. It allowed a focus for the community to "engage in civic dialogue," the first of Becker's determinants. At a later point, after the community had done much of the legwork, it attracted further "attention and economic benefit" through funding and the establishment or recommitment of local businesses, the second on Becker's list. Once the *Streetscape* itself was in full swing, it brought in the artists, engineers, and designers, allowing the third of Becker's points, "connecting artists with communities," to take hold. Finally, with the erecting of the panels and the attendant events, the fourth on Becker's list, "enhancing public appreciation of art," became a reality. Though the *Streetscape* structure is an obvious effect which occurred through the implementation of public art (it *is* public art situated in a public space), the *Streetscape* has also been a cause of profound neighborhood renewal. Again, the success of the project is in the fulfilling of *all* Becker's aspects in and of themselves—the melding of art, community, culture, and economics—into a workable stew.

THEORECTICAL FRAMEWORK

Several years ago, I considered research centering on poetry as public art, but since then, poetry has become an established fact of public art, which is covered in the literature review (found in Chapter 3). Subsequently, I altered my research focus to show the success of *SAS* as determined by Becker's categories, first using general qualitative methods, followed by a more autoethnographic approach when my poem was accepted to be part of *SAS*, and I became a participant-observer. At that point, I found I wanted to expand beyond my own knowledge from the subjective to a collective subjectivity involving other poets experience of the *SAS* toward an emergent objective reality of that particular public art corner of the world.

After establishing a foundation in public art, using its history and social underpinnings, I wished to go back to my roots as a poet, to the world in which I live, and enter it fully, rather than continuing to pursue the public art poetic experience from other sources outside the poets themselves. I wanted to make that connection with other poets to demystify and come to an understanding in meaning of our shared experience regarding the phenomenon known as the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape.* I discovered the best possible methodological approach toward this goal would be phenomenology, and therefore, it became the underlying theoretical framework for this study. As a philosophy, phenomenology is usually divided into two separate foundational arenas: Husserl with transcendental or descriptive phenomenology followed by his former student, Heidegger with hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology.

Although Husserl's version has an appealing pull in wanting to secure the pure essence in the description of a phenomenon, I could not see my way around the concept of bracketing, which would be a suspension of all prior knowledge, biases, experience, and preconceived theories about the object/event (phenomenon) in question. It is not that I could at least try to achieve such, though I would admit to being hard-pressed in the attempt. It is because the latter approach not only allowed me to bring into play, but encouraged such as part of its method, all my history related to the Phoenix art and poetry communities, my connections with the historic neighborhoods, and specifically my longtime interest with the Melrose District and Seventh Avenue. I was able to use what I have already experienced as part of the scaffolding to build upon along with participating in the hermeneutic circle of moving through what is already known to what is newly found and back again (and again and again) in a constant refinement of understanding.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

A traditional problem is not always evident with hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry (further explained in Chapter 4); therefore, my focus was on the *lived* experience of the selected poets and the *essential* meaning of that particular phenomological event to that particular population.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this hermeneutic/interpretive phenomenological study was to describe, explore, and understand the essential meaning of the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* through the *lived* experience of the poets whose works were selected for display on the bus stop panels in the Melrose District, located in Phoenix, Arizona. The *SAS* is defined as an temporary/ongoing public art project.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Phenomenological research is rooted in *lived* experience. Some research questions answered regarding the shared experience of the poets include: *How did the poet first come to know about the SAS project? How do they explain their selected status through their own lived experience? What does "selection" represent? What factors do they perceive led to their poem being chosen? What was their background and preparation—long-term and short-term? What obstacles overcome and/or opportunities taken led to success? What changes were experienced from submission to selection to panel setup? How does SAS impact their lived experience and perception of themselves as a poet? And what was the lived experience after obtaining SAS alumni status (adjustment)?*

This was from the poet's point of view, and a different perspective than that of a selection committee. In fact, it was the poet's original creation that was put forth by the

poet and chosen by the committee, a true creation without interference (maybe some minor guidelines); the *SAS* poet did not fulfill a committee's predetermined request (though poets have been known to guess at what a committee is looking for or are partial toward, and go in that direction), nor can the committee do more but choose from what it was offered. Collaboration and alterations notwithstanding, the artistic expression presented to the public was from the artist. And this is an important factor in studying the artist/poet experience, the creator creating. I interviewed the poets in hopes of finding meaning in their intersubjective relationship with the *SAS* phenomenon.

RESEARCH DESIGN/METHOD

To restate, the purpose of this study was to explore the meaning given to the *SAS* project by chosen, contributing poets. The principal guiding question was, "What is the *essential* meaning and understanding that the poets selected as participants give to the *lived* experience of the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* project?"

A qualitative approach was used due to the existential nature of the study, and specifically hermeneutic/interpretive phenomenological methodology to direct the data gathering methods including individual interviews, field notes, journaling, and memoing. This is fully discussed in Chapter 4.

RESEARCHER

When I began research into the *SAS* project, I was working as a poet, a college English instructor, and an editorial assistant for *Poetry Flash*; in fact, I had submitted several times to the City of Phoenix "Call for Submissions" for *Seventh Avenue* since its inception without success. In 2018, I was finally selected to place my poem on one of the

SAS's panels. I was finally and formally a participant-observer, but I also was performing my role as the sole researcher on this project.

Since I have been a resident of the neighborhood district surrounding Melrose for close to forty years and a member of the local artist/poet community even longer, I have Heidegger's "being-in-the-world" status concerning the context of this study regarding time, location, and genre. In addition, about two-thirds of the poets chosen were in some way connected to Arizona State University (ASU) as was I; in fact, I am also connected to two-thirds of the poets chosen—some were my teachers, others were my schoolmates, and still others were poets with whom I have worked. This familiarity has a potential for bias according to many other methodologies, but hermeneutical, interpretive phenomenology uses such "situatedness" to enhance the access and depth of the research. Rather than see it as a detriment, the insider status is considered a positive from start to finish as it informs the initial research, guides its direction, gives exclusive access to the subjects studied, and helps bring a fuller understanding to the analysis of the research results. With the insight gained from living so physically close to this project and being academically and/or artistically close to the other participants, I could not be in a better position to study the *SAS* according to phenomenological theory.

ASSUMPTIONS

Unlike transcendental/descriptive phenomenology, hermeneutic/interpretive phenomenology does not adhere to the belief that biases can be bracketed out, and so does not dismiss assumptions, but instead acknowledges and accommodates them into the knowledge base and adjusts them accordingly in the presence of new data from the research findings. Since I was following the latter, theoretically and procedurally, five

assumed aspects of my study are listed below, and were grounded in my experience as a poet with a background in art, marketing research, psychology, publishing, and teaching. My research study included my original portfolio paper on *SAS* toward this degree, its attendant literary review, and a vast range bibliographic material in several related areas, along with additional classwork in anthropology and philosophy. My assumptions follow.

First, I believe that poets have a tribe of their own, in the broadest sense of that statement, which means communication comes easily because we as poets speak the same language of art and aesthetics, disagreements in kind notwithstanding. This assumption was based on my firsthand experience of living, studying, and working with poets, and as a poet myself. The comfortable communication can result in a shorthand conversation during the inquiry process. This might cause some errors, such as not listening as carefully because what the subject is going to say is prematurely presumed. Therefore, checks on attentiveness and assumed information must be maintained throughout the interview process.

Second, in the same vein, there might be a tendency to misinterpret rather than fully exhaust the questioning process to ensure a clear understanding of what the subject meant due to supposing a shared vocabulary equals a shared meaning. A definition of terms is a must, along with follow-up questions for clarification.

Third, and still along the same lines, I know most of the *SAS* selected poets, and have met them *all*; therefore, I may wrongly project how they were going to answer and contaminate the process with my own misinterpretation based on past association with the poets. In that case, I may wish to clarify with the interviewee on specifics regarding

their statements, whether they reaffirm or counter my own experience with their current viewpoints.

These three assumptions are similar, but there are subtle differences (the first three assumptions are cultural, definitional, and relational, respectively). Any possible resultant errors might be avoided by adhering to basic interviewing protocol such as active listening, paraphrasing, and repeating questions when necessary.

Though the philosophical study of phenomenology is complex and difficult, the fourth assumption allows that poet-subjects, the majority having completed graduate degrees, would be able to understand the concepts needed to fulfill the requirements of this research project.

The fifth and final assumption is that even if specific outcomes are not set in phenomenological research with a hypothesis as in a quantitative study, an outcome of further knowledge and significance is all but assured according to the philosophical/ theoretical foundation on which this research process is based.

RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE

I had considered several approaches before deciding on phenomenology. In my first effort, briefly mentioned above, I attempted to use quantitative methods to research poetry as public art; when my topic turned specifically to *SAS* and its success, I wrestled between quantitative and qualitative approaches, finally settling on a kind of hybrid narrative. Once I became a participant in the *SAS*, autoethnography became a possibility; however, I developed a strong interest in other poets' experience of the same phenomenon.

By then, I knew only a qualitative method would be appropriate, even though I ruled out several for various reasons: Ethnography emphasizes culture; case study centers on issues over meaning; grounded theory looks toward theory as its name implies; and narrative research employs stories. This left me with phenomenology; I chose to explore the *lived* experience of an object/event (phenomenon) and to reflect upon the meaning found therein.

The fork in the road between the two major divisions of phenomenology was difficult at first as I was attracted by Husserl's commitment to pure essence, but it became apparent that I was not going to leave decades of experience behind on the off chance I could bracket it all away. Bracketing also infers that there is an implicit meaning in the object itself. I wasn't sure that was my belief except on a metaphysical level, which would reduce everything and all, at least in my version, into the One from where It came (and perhaps never left). But in Heidegger, I could understand how the individual subjectivities could factor into a collective understanding of a phenomenon, revealing an objective reality of meaning, which is the goal of phenomenological study. Therefore, I traveled down the road of hermeneutic/interpretive phenomenology in hopes of discovering thick description of personal meaning lending significance to our *Dasein* (being-in-the-world).

In the final analysis of hermeneutical research, when focusing on a study such as mine, where accounts were given regarding a phenomenon, and meanings were allowed to emerge, these illuminations might further "inform future possibilities about life questions" (Dibley, Dickerson and Duffy 20). And that is how phenomenological research finds significance in a study; however, it is also suggested that the inaugural use

of such methodology in an unexplored topic such as mine can be that "unique contribution to knowledge" (Dibley, Dickerson and Duffy 48), and therefore, significant in the field.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter 1 introduces the study with a personal narrative that places my interest in the phenomenon, known as *SAS,* in context. It discusses the theoretical framework of phenomenology, illuminates the problem and purpose statements, presents the research method and research questions, and reviews my assumptions and biases as a researcher. Chapter 1 concludes with a summary of each chapter and a brief glossary of terms.

Chapter 2 gives an historical context to *SAS*. It includes the history of the neighborhood before *SAS*, and how the decay of that area became the seed for the public art project; it delineates the progression of *SAS* from "visual art only" to "artists and poets," then "poets only," and now, something completely different. It reviews how the earlier calls for poetry submissions were open calls (without a theme) and then evolved into themed calls with specific restrictions from topic to length to format. It also considers my evolution from observer to participant-observer, after having a poem accepted, finally, after a decade of submissions (I may have missed a year or two). The drastic economic shift for the better of the Melrose Neighborhood District warranted the inclusion of this chapter, especially since those integral to the *SAS* project also attribute the positive changes to the *SAS*. Also, hermeneutic phenomenology, which is my approach, places more emphasis on the historical and contextual aspects of the phenomenon under study than other forms of phenomenological methodology (Cohen).

Chapter 3 grounds the study in a literature review, which examines public art and public art from the angle of poetry, and explores qualitative research, specifically phenomenology, and more specifically, phenomenological research involving poets, of which there is a dearth. The lack of research is also discussed. The "Statement of Question" ends the chapter, except for a special mention at close of fascism/anti-Semitism and its connection to Heidegger, the main founder of what I call the second school of phenomenology and the theoretical premise on which I based my study.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology beginning with the defense for both qualitative and phenomenological research. It details the researcher's role and participant selection strategies—the convenience sample, size, and recruitment. The IRB approval process and protection of human subjects are covered; IRB materials are noted and located in the appendices. Data gathering is explained as in-depth, one-on-one recorded (audio and video) interviews. Data management strategies from collection to analysis (organization, analysis, interpretation, and synthesis) are examined. Other matters explored include trustworthiness (credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability), limitations and delimitations, bias/bias control, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 follows the steps of data reduction in its data presentation. The chapter contains narrative summaries of the poets' responses to the research question derived from the interview transcripts; the corrected transcripts of the main research question are found in the appendices; the narratives are embedded in the chapter itself. Chapter 5 also provides analytic memos reflecting on different areas of the research. Tables from the

first and second cycle coding methods are created, displayed, analyzed, and interpreted; the first cycle produced twenty-five codes and the second cycle produced six themes.

Chapter 6 reviews the purpose of the study along with the main research question. It summarizes the research, addresses the findings through an interpretation of themes, looks at weaknesses and strengths, and concludes with a few final thoughts on the research, on the results, and on future recommendations.

TERMINOLOGY

Bracketing—In bracketing, how one understands, judges, or knows a "thing" are set aside to allow for the phenomenon to be seen purely, without (ego) influence.

Dasein—Translates to "there-being" or "being there" in a situated, contextual world or as (a way of) "being-in-the-world."

Descriptive (Transcendental) Phenomenology—A Husserlian-oriented research approach contending that a phenomenon has a describable, invariant, "pure" essence obtainable using various methods, including "bracketing." *It seeks to describe the essence of experience in its purest form.*

Hermeneutic Circle—A description of the process of understanding by looking at the whole, then the parts, then analyzing and synthesizing, with new data introduced back to the whole again, all in a "spiral" motion, which is repeated.

Interpretive (Hermeneutic) Phenomenology—A Heideggerian-oriented research approach contending that a phenomenon can be known through lived experience, including all prior background expectations, providing a context for meaning. *It seeks to reveal the meaning of experience informed by the context in which the experience occurs.*

Phenomenology—A philosophy and a methodology (qualitative) concerned with understanding phenomena through lived experience.

Situatedness—A state where the researcher is connected or situated within the world they wish to study to the point of "being directed towards" the research interest.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This is the world and context of the *SAS*. This dissertation, along with my proposal and my portfolio paper from which most of the information found in this chapter is derived, are the most complete documents of its history and evolution. Only few minor and brief news articles have been written about what I consider to be a most phenomenal public art project in the City of Phoenix.

SEVENTH AVENUE STREETSCAPE

The research for the *SAS* was primarily done through interviews (city administrators of all levels involved in the project, ASU administrators and architects, Melrose business owners, and poets whose poems were selected for the panel displays), City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture archives/records/websites, public relations/public service announcements, and local newspaper accounts. In addition to the above, I have personal knowledge and experience with the neighborhood and the project. Regarding the former (location), I've been a homeowner in an adjacent historic neighborhood district since 1988, and lived in the area since the early 1980s. I also founded, along with Rosemarie Dombrowski and David Chorlton, the *Phoenix Poetry Series,* formerly the *Copper Star Poetry Series* (see fig. 1 for inaugural flyer); we held our very first reading at the Copper Star, and continued there for an entire year.[2] As far as

[2] Much *SAS* local history is packed into this single sentence: Rosemarie Dombrowski went on to become the inaugural Poet Laureate of Phoenix, and by virtue of that position, she was involved in many aspects of the 2018 *SAS* project*;* David Chorlton was one of only two poets chosen *twice* to participate in the *SAS;* Copper Star Coffee is owned by Bill Sandweg, one of the initial "movers and shakers" to propel Melrose out of its decline; and prior to being *Phoenix Poetry Series,* we took the place name of *Copper Star Poetry Series.*

the latter—the *SAS* project—I was enamored with its concept from the first that I heard of it, when it was accepting only visual art for the billboards. I followed *SAS* from its initial "Call for Submissions" through present, though I never submitted as an artist. In the first year that poetry was included, I submitted almost annually for almost a decade, until I finally was selected to participate in its most recent installation, Series 11, in 2018. I am now *officially* a participant-observer in terms of my research project, which was not the case when I began my study.

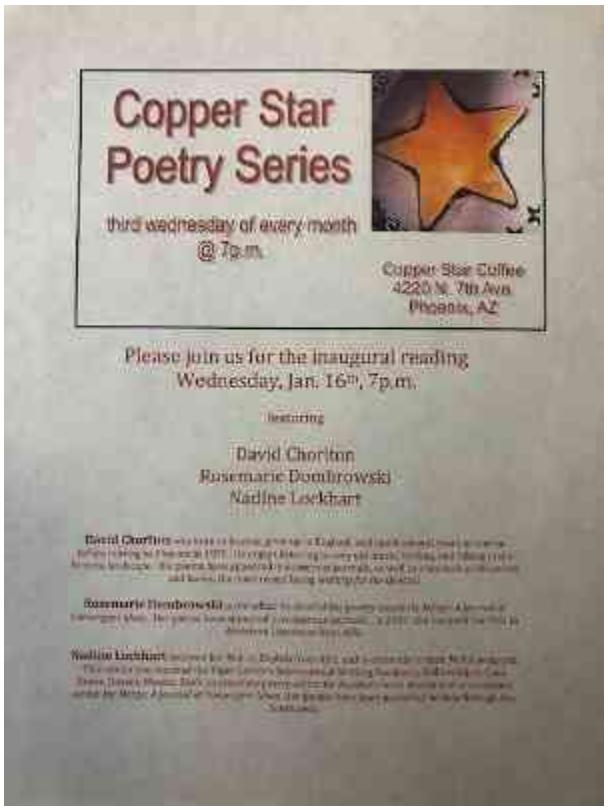

Fig. 1. Copper Star Poetry Series Flyer. Phoenix. 2008.

History of the Melrose District and Seventh Avenue Streetscape. The inception of the *SAS* could possibly be pinpointed when these three people met: Lisa Huggins-Hubbard, neighborhood specialist with the Neighborhood Services Department; Leah Fry, a council

assistant; and Renee Pepino, owner of Livia's Italian Restaurant.[3] They went door-to-door. A hundred and twenty-one businesses were contacted to see who was interested in working with the Neighborhood Services and Police Departments. Every day they worked on something—talking with people in the community, making handouts for business prospects, identifying owners of vacant property, or looking into funding sources. What did the neighborhood want? That was the question. Although the community had a strong voice, whether it be business and/or land owners, Huggins-Hubbard noted that the people living there did not know each other, the homeless population was growing, and some parts of the neighborhood had become "open toilets." As the business owners became fed up with calling in complaints to the city, the owners of Livia's and Chester's sought out then councilman Phil Gordon, saying, "We need help," thus starting the conversation and the genesis of the Seventh Avenue Merchants Association (SAMA), along with residents who decided to it was time to "Take their city back!" (Sandweg). And so began the engagement of civic dialogue with the community, the first of Becker's directives as mentioned earlier, even though no conscious awareness of his four steps were evident. *SAS* appeared to evolve organically and only matched Becker's initiatives after-the-fact; however, this is not surprising given that Becker's theory came from his observing the real-life patterns found in successful public art projects.

[3] At this point, Livia's had been sold, but no payments were made, so the original owner, Renee Pepino agreed to reopen if the area was cleaned up. On a personal note, the owner of a marketing research firm where I worked for twenty-five years, held our annual Christmas parties there, along with informal business dinners. I had penchant for mixing Italian and Blue Cheese Dressing that eventually became a standard menu option for salads, though the recipe did not make it into Renee's 2010 cookbook *More Than Pasta: How to Make Quick, Easy and Delicious Authentic Italian Dishes in 30 minutes or less!*

According to Bill Sandweg, owner of Copper Star Coffee, although there were limited resources from the city, they would go where asked to support; in other words, if there is a commitment in partnership with the locals (business and residents), the city will also take an interest. There were votes at stake, and if a neighborhood was vital or revitalized into a thriving source of business, sales tax feeds the city and state at stated percentages. It is a win-win. And once the city was involved—that partnering made it attractive to ASU. And thus began the possibility of Becker's second directive, which is to attract attention and, thereby, economic benefits.

How bad was this section of Phoenix? In the 1990s, beginning to end, the main businesses in Melrose consisted of drugs and prostitution (Sandweg). During that time, the area housed a methadone clinic, a plasma center, a gun shop, a topless bar, several dive bars, an adult bookstore, and a head shop—all anti-redevelopment. Blight and graffiti were the tragic visual expressions of its unhealthy environment.

Around 1996 or 1997, the first business alliance in the city began to form. This was not yet SAMA, but a neighborhood association to obtain grants for improvements in safety such as security lights, alley lights, motion detectors, bike patrol, street patrol, crime prevention surveys, police talks, fence lights, and authority to arrest for trespassing. Partnering with the city and ASU did not occur until SAMA took hold, and this did not take hold overnight; it was a 6-to-7-year labor of love to bring together residents, business owners, funding, and community. In fact, the initial call for *SAS* entries (*Visual Artists Only*) did not happen until 2003.

In 2001, I wrote a three-part prose piece, "A Portrait of an Artist's Trip Tips After a San Francisco Weekend Visit or My New Life," the first part of which was published in

the local literary arts journal *exsanguinate* in 2002. This excerpt from "Part II," gives an idea of how Seventh Avenue was populated and perceived in the late 1990s through the early 2000s:

> . . . 7th Avenue. From Indian School to North of Camelback,[4] on either side, is populated with a swell bunch of antique and secondhand furniture stores . . . wrought iron, retro, wicker . . . my money was gone because of an *All Sales Final* dinette purchase . . . I could only look now . . . Seventh also had the drug whores. They walk up and down the long avenue, thinking they still have it . . . They look my age, but are ten years younger, and they *all* can do hair . . . High, thick hair with Henna Red highlights.

The images listed above from a triptych excerpt are an accurate picture of the area at the turn of the millennia.

There is another unusual feature of the "Sevenths"—Avenue and Street—they are both surface streets that provide ways in and out of the city; they function as pass-throughs, each with their own "suicide lane."[5] But Seventh Avenue has a unique turn—it is the only non-major thoroughfare with a curve (Huggins-Hubbard). This "curve" at Seventh Avenue and Glenrosa became the focal point for Lisa Huggins-Hubbard and Darren Petrucci in their vision of creating a destination much like what is found in other cities such as San Diego and San Francisco. They wanted only small businesses from Indian School Road to Camelback Road, with no chain stores—there were none then and

[4] The location described is the exact area of what would soon to be known more popularly as the Melrose District.

[5] The center lane switches up during morning and evening drive hours to accommodate increased traffic; therefore, in the morning, the center lane is used by vehicles coming into the city, and in the evening for vehicles exiting the city. It is called the suicide lane because of the confusion of this change in usage and the large number of accidents which occur.

there are none now (Huggins-Hubbard). Petrucci, a professor with ASU Architecture and Urban Design, had travelled all over the world and saw these "Open Art" opportunities; he came up with the Art Panels/Shade Canopy concept for the basis of the Seventh Avenue infrastructure, seeing the panels as a one-piece, low maintenance art format to be changed out once a year, and always paired with an event[6] such as a ribbon cutting or a reading (once poetry was included). The idea was *live* art rather than a permanent, stagnant fixture, which is what public art often becomes—set in place to stay until no longer noticed as if dead. This concept of rotation was new to the Office Arts and Culture.

Again, the *Streetscape* was part of the infrastructure of the area, rather than something additive, rather than public art that was placed or integrated at a location afterward, such as the "textual" public art and poetry found at other Phoenix metropolitan locations. They were not *Seventh Avenue,* where the art was conceived as part of a project's placemaking element. The infrastructural amenity would be a bus stop with shade elements providing light at night and a pleasing aesthetics in design; it would also include the experience of the art panels—all this instead of a utilitarian bench secured to hot concrete surrounded by ad-covered billboards. What is seen with the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* is a site-specific approach to public art, even more than that because the site did not only determine the project, it is the project.

The goal was creating a "Main Street" out of the funky, little neighborhood business corridor known as Seventh Avenue. To illustrate, Copper Star Coffee was an old transmission repair shop/gas station—grease everywhere, non-working cars parked along

[6] Events are not only paired with public art; events themselves are considered a form of public art.

the street—but it has been transformed into a place where local business owners frequent, say "hello," get to know each other. And, of course, it is a magnet for customers wanting good coffee, good pastries, good company, and the feel of an "old town" comfortable community space.[7]

At one point, Danny Valdivia, owner of Los Compadres, made clear the necessity of having neighborhood support, "Our businesses are nothing without the residents behind us" (Huggins-Hubbard). Yet, in the beginning, not many were very supportive of the attempt at revitalization through the public art process because the concept was so unusual and the obstacles seemed insurmountable. Council would ask the makeshift steering committee, "Why are you wasting your time?" Later, many on the council who dismissed this award-winning project came back and confessed that they were glad the initiators stuck with it. Of course, not all businesses were siding with the new program. "Adult" business owners resisted the change as it would mean the end of an era for them.

With the *Streetscape's* success, everyone wanted to be like Seventh Avenue (Huggins-Hubbard). Seventh started what was not done elsewhere. For instance, colorful banners have been used in city neighborhoods from New York to Los Angeles as a widely-known placemaking technique to promote theme destinations; however, since before the inception of the *Streetscape*, the City of Phoenix had never allowed banners outside the downtown area. Tom Simplot, Council Member at that time, stepped in to help—and sometime in the middle of one night, banners went up in the Melrose District, and they have never come down (Huggins-Hubbard). Attached high onto poles, the forty-

[7] According to PPS Project for Public Spaces, the second of "Eleven Principles for Creating Great Community Places" is to "Create a Place, Not a Design" making people "welcome and comfortable" by developing physical relationships to the surrounding environment such as seating, landscaping, and circulation patterns.

four banners in five different colors—aqua, green, orange, pink, and purple—are so well-integrated that they blend almost unseen into either side of the mile-long stretch from Indian School to Camelback. They begin at the relatively new Melrose Arch, which defines the entry at the southern border on Indian School Road. The Arch evolved as a natural outgrowth of the merchant-driven progression toward a destination space once the *Streetscape* was established. Even the name, "Melrose District," was intentionally conceived for this location, which had no prior identification, to create a place brand. Along with the entry arch and banners (see fig. 2 and fig. 3, respectively), sidewalks out of historic-looking banded brick were recreated throughout the corridor space to increase the connections of neighborhood continuity through the tactile and the visual. In addition, Seventh Avenue has the only street festival,[8] and it is also uniquely zoned.[9]

In sum, Seventh Avenue became a demo site,[10] a proof of the theory that this kind of *Streetscape* helps community and economic development, which equals revitalization (Sandweg). And, yes, to repeat: It all started from the *Streetscape* (Huggins-Hubbard)

[8] Every March, the entire Seventh Avenue strip is closed to vehicle traffic to make way for a street celebration. Over 200 vendors now are attending, along with a live music stage show and a car show. It is difficult to get an exact count of attendees, but some accounts claim 17K (Huggins-Hubbard).
[9] An overlay has been allowed for outdoor merchandising and antique store display. Usually, no retail is permitted on the street, but C2 zoning is given only to Seventh Avenue. This overlay also came down on adult use—no more porn, gun, or topless establishments, or any other business considered to be unhealthy for neighborhoods (Huggins-Hubbard).
[10] This demonstration effort of the bus stop/shade canopy/art panels never got further than the Melrose District due to the economic recession and subsequent budget cuts beginning in 2008 (Vaughan-Brubaker).

Fig. 2. Melrose Arch with Banner (aqua). Phoenix. View in 2020.
Photographer: Nadine Lynn Lanier.

Fig. 3. Melrose Banner (purple). Phoenix. View in 2020.
Photographer: Nadine Lynn Lanier.

AT RISE: Seventh Avenue Streetscape. The *SAS* was a collaborative effort involving the City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture Public Art Program, SAMA, the Melrose Neighborhood, and the ASU School of Architecture (Sandweg). It was also a part of "Pedestrian Amenities Along Seventh Avenue," a public-private urban infrastructure project "designed to be a catalyst for the revitalization of the Seventh Avenue commercial corridor in midtown Phoenix" ("Students' poems selected for community series"). The project was originally conceived as a series of small, visual art billboards that would exhibit reproductions of original work created by Arizona artists, strategically placed in the Melrose neighborhood district (see fig. 4 for map), along Seventh Avenue at Glenrosa, between Camelback and Indian School Roads at bus stop staging areas to provide shade and artistic connection to the community and mass transit users.

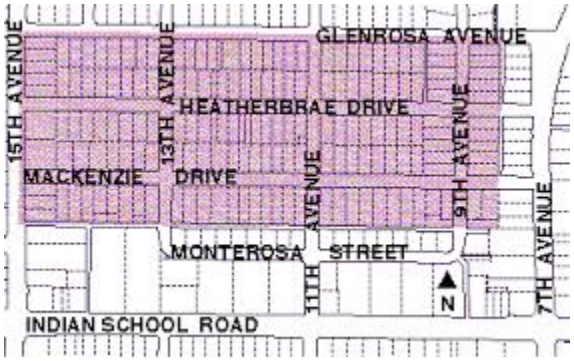

Fig. 4. Melrose District Street Map

The panels themselves are framed, double-sided, backlit, translucent Lexan, approximately 5'6" h x 7'10" w. As these dimensions are non-standard, but custom, costs for building and maintenance are higher. Both sides can be used for display; therefore, three panels give six art platform opportunities. The art itself must be able to be "reproduced using standard sign technology," so this project lends itself toward two-

dimensional art (painting, photography), though three-dimensional works are considered, even chosen, but displayed as two-dimensional.

At its inception, the project description issued by the City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture stated that the artists were to create two new original works, and the Office of Arts and Culture buys the reproduction rights only, which include exclusive rights to reproduce the actual art for the panel displays, and to reproduce the images for promotional and/or educational use. The artist/poet awards ranged from $750 to $1000.

The purpose of the signage/shade element was to, in part, provide "a highly visible and inviting infrastructure that will enhance the pedestrian and bicyclist experience and encourage bordering merchants to make improvements to their properties and signage." The Lexan panels would be changed out on a six-month-to-annual basis with the actual artwork reverting to the artist after a year of public showing. Later displays have remained in place for as long as three-to-five years.[11]

As noted, the *SAS* began purely as a visual public art project; three years later, the project incorporated poetry into the installations—art on one side, poetry on the other. That lasted through six more series. Finally, in later incarnations, a theme was determined by the city: recycle/reduce/reuse and sustainability. In the first of the themed series, artists and poets collaborated to create art and poetry that was closely aligned. By the second series in this new direction of ecologically-themed works, the *Streetscape* became poetry *only*, though it was still set on integrated graphic backdrops as an enhancement to the poetics, but as a storybook format. Those enhancements were becoming more

[11] Series 10 and Series 11 were on display for three and five years, respectively, due to funding and personnel changes. Additionally, Series 11 gained two extra years in public view due to the pandemic.

sophisticated. By 2018, another year of all poetry, individual graphic artists working for an award-winning design group were hired in lieu of a singular graphic artist. Ultimately, each poet was assigned their own personal artist, which resulted in unique panel creations instead of the usual visual homogeneity across all panels.

With the *Streetscape's* history in mind, the *SAS* divides into neatly into three phases, thus far: *Visual Artists Only, Artists and Poets,* and *Environmentally-themed.* My research is primarily focused on the latter two because they contain the poetic component. These were never predetermined phases, but grew organically as the *Streetscape* evolved. The future may hold *SAS* installations that are neither visual nor textual, but something other, perhaps audio.

The first three years of the project are considered *Visual Artists Only*, with a "Call for Artists" going out in 2003, and the first installation opening on May 7, 2004. Its featured artists[12] had two works on either side of a panel; the images ranged from ancient and modern associative images of the Southwest to replicas of local Phoenix venues, including mockups of Seventh Avenue itself to visual expressions not even remotely connected to Arizona (City of Phoenix, Office of Arts and Culture, 7th Avenue Streetscape-Series 1). In addition, in this inaugural year, the project won the Environmental Excellence Award from Valley Forward ("Students' poems selected for community series").

The second collection ran from August 24, 2005, through November 20, 2006. It featured, again, only visual artists, two works each, but this time, eight artists[13] and two

[12] Quetzal Guerrero, Elizabeth Pfeiffer, and Erin Sotak.
[13] Alice Leora Briggs, Ernie Button, Alex Jones, Kenneth Richardson, Mark Rubin-Toles, Rhonda Shakur Carter, and TRA25 Capsule (Mark Freedman and Oliver Hibert).

alternates[14] were chosen instead of only three in total, and the work was shown in rotation. With one exception, regardless of genre or materials, the art exhibited obvious ties to the desert and/or the Arizona urban landscape, or otherwise made personal-political commentary through images on life/love/community; two artists specifically referenced the Melrose District, site of the *Streetscape,* in their work (City of Phoenix, Office of Arts and Culture, 7th Avenue Streetscape-Series 2).

The third and final *Visual Artists Only* installation began December 1, 2006, and ended in 2008. This time, only one work per featured artist[15] was displayed on either side of a panel, and again, all but one had a specific connection to the Arizona landscape, though each artist expressed their connection very differently in style, content, and materials (everything from watercolor and paper collage to digital photo-mosaic and linoleum print). In sum, only one artist each year was selected who was not drawing from the community or culture of Arizona for inspiration, and at least one artist each year was selected who created a piece specifically depicting the Melrose District/Seventh Avenue (City of Phoenix, Office of Arts and Culture, 7th Avenue Streetscape-Series 3).

In Series 1, the art was chosen from a response to an advertised call for participants. Locals applied, and those that were selected were awarded about a thousand dollars for their work. The selection committee was comprised of one artist, two art professionals from different departments at ASU, the Arts and Culture commissioner, one Arts and Culture staff, and two community representatives. The project coordinator was Jana Weldon. A six-hour meeting was held in a conference room at City Hall. Basic

[14] Rhonda Shakur Carter and B. Royalty.
[15]Allison Bebout, Hillary Gamerow, Shirly Kleppe, Paho Mann, Ryan Huna Smith, and Wendy Willis.

instructions were as follows: *Select three artists to create two original works each than can be readily reproduced using standard sign technology for the art panel in the public right-of-way at 7th Avenue and Glenrosa.* There were slight changes in the years following, mostly in terms of how many works were selected.

ENTER: Poets! By Series 4, Ed Lebow, Public Art Program Director at the City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture, desired something different, something with new energy to take the project to another level, and he saw that could be done by expanding opportunities for artists,[16] especially those underrepresented in the public arts, such as poets (August 2016). Enter Kevin Vaughan-Brubaker in 2006, hired as the Public Art Project Manager for the City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture. Vaughan-Brubaker, a poet, earned his MFA in Creative Writing at ASU; he was a natural fit for bringing poetry into the public art realm of Phoenix.

Vaughan-Brubaker was waiting for a bus when he got the idea of coupling art and poetry—one side of the panel would have artwork and the other side, a poem (2015). There would still be only three billboards, so visual artists would now have to share the vertical real estate equally with the writers. This was the end of the visual art monopoly as the artists would receive three panels and the poets would receive three panels. The entry guidelines were open-themed.

Another addition to the physical *Streetscape* was pairing it to an annual public reading—a live event—now that poetry, with its history embedded in an oral tradition, was part of the mix. The inaugural year of both artists and poets was 2008; all three poets

[16] The word "artists" is used here in the general sense to include poets along with the makers of visual art, such as painters, sculptors, and photographers. It could even mean performance artists such as actors and musicians.

chosen were from the MFA Creative Writing Program at ASU: Douglas Jones, Elizabyth Ann Hiscox, and Julie Hampton. All but Hampton had subject matter relating to Arizona. Jones' "Mouthfuls of Sunset at the Gas Station" is a slice of Southwest life involving cactus, ripe fruit, the creatures who feed off that fruit, and the people who watch that slice; Hiscox's, "On the Bus or En Route" is a lyrical narrative about personal interactions while using the Valley's mass transit system. Hampton's whimsical poem about a finicky child at dinner. The poems were placed on backgrounds designed by a graphic artist. The backgrounds had simple, colorful, geometric shapes that mirrored the poetic narrative; for example, Jones' "Mouthfuls of Sunset at the Gas Station" showed the sun going down into the bottom left corner of the canvas; Hiscox's poem about a chance encounter while riding the bus was superimposed onto an abstracted transit route map; Hampton's whimsy continued with abstract, vagrant peas running around the edge of the picture plane of her poem (see fig. 5). The three art pieces had no relation to the poems with which they shared the reverse side of the panels; one was a photograph of local hikers on Piestewa Peak in the Phoenix Mountain Preserve and the other two were conceptual collages, one on sports and the other on oil/superfund cleanups[17] (City of Phoenix, Office of Arts and Culture, 7th Avenue Streetscape-Series 4).

[17] Selected artists: Eliza Gregory, Keith Stanton, and Kermit Lee.

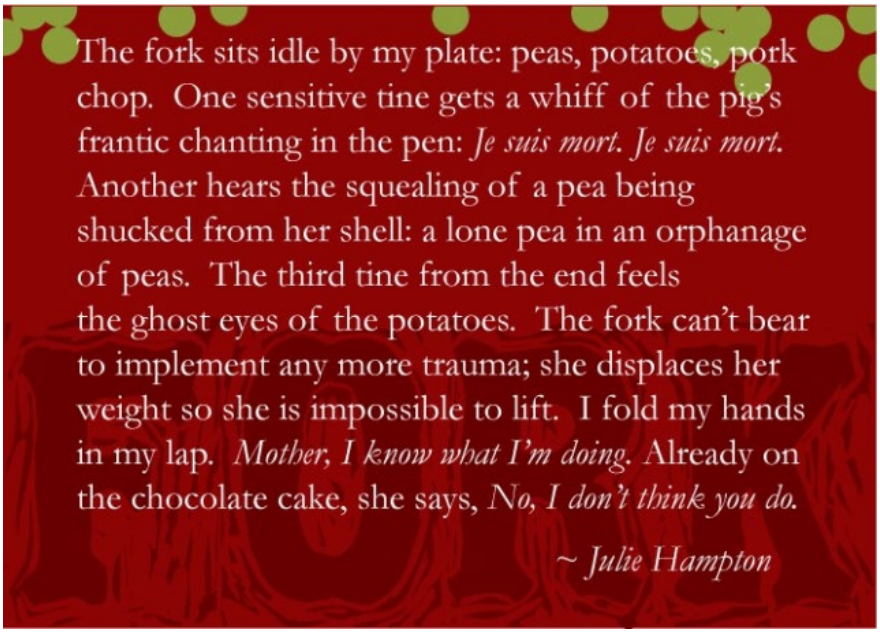

Fig. 5. Hampton's "Fork," *Streetscape* Panel, 2008,
City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture.

Series 5 began in 2009, ending in 2010, with a format the same as Series 4—three artists and three poets. The poet/poems selected were David Chorlton's "Predictions," Miles Waggener's "Harvest," and Sean Nevin's "Tending Garden." The selection committee that year seemed to have a penchant for nature, gardens, and life/death issues; each poem contained very specific images of seeds, bulbs, blooms, flowers, and the earth (right down to how far past the knuckle into soil is measured for bulb planting). In this way, there was a loose, vague connection, but nevertheless a connection among all three poems and the visual art chosen—one pairing even closely matching in titles, Nevin's, "Tending Garden," and Kathryn Maxwell's art piece, "Tending the Genetic Garden II." The poems were set on a simple background developed by a graphic designer to specifically reflect the text as in the year before. The art included the first three-dimensional work photographed as a two-dimensional image for the display. In this

round, *none* of the art had a connection to Phoenix[18] (City of Phoenix, Office of Arts and Culture, 7th Avenue Streetscape-Series 5).

Series 6 opened on April 2, 2010, during the First Friday Art Walk; it ran from April 2010 to April 2011. The poets included Catherine Hammond, Ryan Holden, and Kathleen Winter. Hammond's won with a translation of a short poem by Spanish poet Olvido Garcia Valdes, who was awarded the Premio Nacional, Spain's highest poetry prize, in 2007. It was the first translation to be chosen; it was about "spider mothers"—nothing to do with sense of place, and an outlier of the three, in that Holden and Winter specifically wrote about Phoenix and Arizona, respectively. Holden wrote an (oxymoronic) urban pastoral focused on failing to witness a November meteor shower in downtown Phoenix due to light pollution.

In an interview with Winter, I asked about her poem, "Landscape of Wishes," which seemed to be two poems in one, divided by a one-line stanza in the middle: The first stanza almost spiritual; in the center, a one-line turn posed as a question; the third stanza, descriptive images, specifically of Arizona landmarks. She explained that she had submitted it the year before, but they were looking for something more place-oriented[19] and local, to go with the Phoenix environment, so she decided to revise it into something less esoteric and more rooted in the Arizona landscape (Winter).

As with all series since the introduction of poets into the public project, a graphic artist worked with the text in the same way as with prior poets to create colorful (but muted), geometric shapes, complimenting rather than competing with the poem. The

[18] Selected artists: Goran Konjevod, Linda Ingraham, and Kathryn Maxwell.
[19] Winter may have thought this to be true, but in fact, *none* of the three poems chosen the prior year were Phoenix place-centered.

showcased visual artists[20] produced work that was again far afield from anything related to Phoenix (City of Phoenix, Office of Arts and Culture, 7th Avenue Streetscape-Series 6).

By this third year of poetry being included, seven of the nine winners had been current or former ASU students in the MFA Creative Writing Program; in fact, all from Series 4 and all from Series 6 were from the program. Therefore, it was no surprise in Series 7 that all poets were again connected to ASU's MFA program: Hugh Martin and Josh Rathkamp had been students, and Jeannine Savard was an assistant professor.

Rathkamp's poem, "What We Once Needed to Know," and Savard's, "Little Wind in the Neighborhood," appear on the surface to address nature, and possibly, by inferred associations, set in Phoenix . . . or anywhere, but the subtext of both is beyond this world, moving into the metaphysical/the mystical from the mundane. For the most part, the couplings of art[21] and poetry were unrelated to each other, and rather eclectic in selection; however, Martin's "Nocturne with Sandstorm" could be paired with artist Wagener's "Spring, Mothership Gathering," which looks like the image of a haboob, the very intense dust storms found blowing through Phoenix and other parts of the Southwest during the monsoon season (see fig. 6 and fig. 7, respectively) (City of Phoenix, Office of Arts and Culture, 7th Avenue Streetscape-Series 7). Martin's poem, however, speaks of the Arabian Desert in Northern Kuwait. And by then, according to Vaughan-Brubaker, any intentional attempts at pairing art and poetry had ended; of course, if something

[20] Selected artists: Catie Raya, Suzzane Falk, and Colton Brock.
[21] Selected artists: Ellen Wagener, Kris Sanford, and Dayvid Lemmon.

matched up by happenstance, they would have placed poem and picture on opposite sides of the same panel, such as with Nevin and Maxwell in Series 5 (2015).

The unveiling of Series 7 was on Thursday, April 2, 2011, with an attendant reading, and the panels remained until April 2012. As with the poems in prior series, they were set on uncomplicated graphic backdrops which support the poetic communication without upstaging the poem itself.

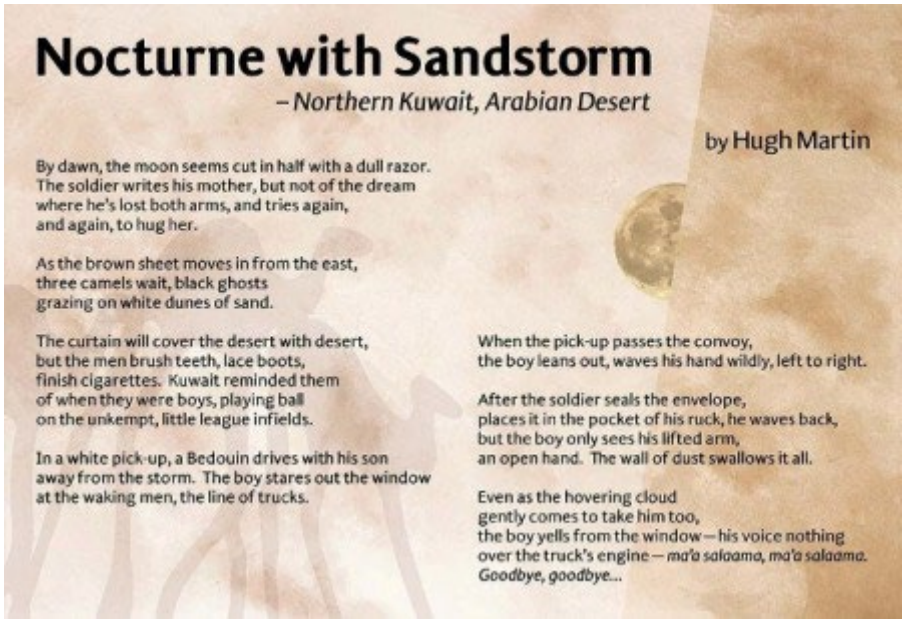

Fig. 6. Martin's "Nocturne with Sandstorm," *Streetscape* Panel, 2011, City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture.

Fig. 7. Wagener's "Spring, Mothership Gathering," *Streetscape* Panel, 2011, City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture.

Series 8 opened with a dedication ceremony on March 3, 2012. The poets talked about their art and read their poems from a stage attached to a semi-truck; afterward, the poets were each presented with miniature versions of the poem panels for their own collections. Since the reading was paired with a street festival, there was a larger audience than was usually in attendance, and it also included a visit from Mayor Stanton. The literary works included "Dumpster Diving," a Haiku by Aaron Johnson made to look like a ransom note, "Waiting for the Monsoon," by Torran Anderson, which due to its placement on the panel almost suggested an alternative reading of an apparent concrete poem, and finally, "Where You Come From," by Iliana Roche, a true concrete[22] poem as the text was shaped into the spiral of a pastel-colored conch shell with underlying sand and wave. All three poems were dependent upon a visual component upon which the

[22] Concrete poetry is poetry in which the meaning or effect is conveyed partly or wholly by visual means, using patterns of words or letters and other typographical devices, often to create shapes.

poems were built: A ransom note, a matrix, and a seashell. This would be the final year poets were allowed to submit on any topic. The visual art included two outdoor photographs, which could be Phoenix or could be elsewhere as there were no determining features to recognize place; the third was a painting, an abstract diptych[23] (City of Phoenix, Office of Arts and Culture, 7th Avenue Streetscape-Series 8)In the divisions I have created as mentioned above, Phase 2 contained the first wave of poets, exhibiting from 2008 through 2012, Series 4-8. Though the people comprising the selection panel changed annually, it usually consisted of a Street Transportation Department employee, a poet, a visual artist, a commission member, and a community member. Entries numbered from around seventy-five to a hundred each year. In the first couple attempts at bringing poets into the project, Vaughan-Brubaker stated the competition was not anonymous and the visual art was chosen first; the poems were picked second with an eye for synergy between the two genres, or at the very least, to pick poems that related, however loosely, to the art (2015). About halfway through his tenure, the competition became anonymous and the idea of matching the poetry to the art was jettisoned. If there was some kind of associative response between a poem and an art piece, it was coincidental at that point. After the art and poem were chosen, a graphic designer was hired to integrate the words into a subtle, visual background which supported the text. The background graphics for the initial two years were designed by Cameo Hill; the second two years, they were by designed by Eve Vrla. Vaughan-Brubaker took another position and left the City of Phoenix by late 2010; Jeanine Garcia took over as Public Art Project Manager and would

[23] Selected artists: Casebeer, William Legoullon, and Jen Urso.

remain in that position through Series 10. Vaughan-Brubaker was not involved in Series 8, and minimally with Series 7. His legacy was bringing poetry—quality poetry—to the *Streetscape,* along with an annual poetry reading event.

Quality was an ever-present thread running through all the selected poems as the main concern of selection was well-crafted poetry, regardless of form and content. For the public, quality means the level of craft shown on the panels was beyond the amateur and beyond what is often deemed "community" art. Of course, most of the chosen poets were affiliated with ASU's MFA program. In the first five years, ten out of the fifteen poets, clearly two-thirds, came from the ASU program; three of the remaining five had graduate degrees from other universities, and one of those poets was an associate professor through ASU's Creative Writing Department. Even Vaughan-Brubaker, as noted earlier, had graduated from ASU with his MFA in 2001.

Also, allowing the poet to submit his or her work on any theme in any form had the benefit of exposing the public to all kinds of human experiences that a poem might have to share. The poems could be personal, local, foreign, urban, nature-infused, meditative/spiritual, or whimsical. Formats included everything from free verse to haiku, from concrete to pastoral, and even a brief, five-line translation. Poem length varied from the shortest (a ten-word, three-line haiku) to others running almost thirty lines. The average poem was about 16 to 17 lines. Aside from a poem that is obviously either minimal or epic in length, descriptions of short and long are relative. For example, Nevin won with a 17-line poem he submitted for Series 5. When I had informed Savard about the competition for Series 7, the only submission advice she received came from Nevin, who told her, "Whatever you do, make sure it's succinct" (Savard). She submitted an 8-

line poem, considering a short poem to be about half as long as his idea of short. Ironically, the two poems chosen along with Savard's were the longest ever to be displayed—one was 26 lines, the other was 28 lines. There is a habit among poets entering competitions to try to guess at what the judges might be looking for and write to that end. In truth, usually the best poems place, regardless of any judge's bias toward topic, form, and so forth.

In line with Becker's third and fourth areas of public art qualities—the connection of artists with communities and the enhancement of public appreciation of art—each poet involved in the beginning years expressed only positivity concerning their public art experience. Poets Elizabyth Ann Hiscox, Sean Nevin, and Miles Waggener were all interviewed for an *ASU News* article (Students' poems selected for community series).

Hiscox felt "the more chances that people have to interact with art the better. And I do think foregrounding 'art' there [Melrose] is important—for ordinary people to interact with and around it: eat a sandwich nearby or hop on a bus." Hiscox continues, "For someone, then, to encounter language out in the world that is trying to speak, not to sell, is almost revolutionary. Anyone can experience a moment out in the world WITH art: not have to retreat from the public space to find art."

Hiscox made two important points. First, how rare it is to find poetry in public with no other intent but expression; second, that public art means accessibility, something not to be limited by institutions. Regarding the former, in about five years hence from Hiscox's series, the freedom to express as determined by the poet was restricted to a predetermined theme by the city; in the latter, accessibility is a complex issue in public

art, with more at stake than just the physical admittance (Phillips 1992: 298), but this discussion is larger than the scope of this paper.

Nevin states in the same article, "I was familiar with this important project and I believe strongly in the need for, and value of, public art." He felt his poem touches "beauty in the commonplace . . . akin to discovering a poem at a city bus stop." Nevin, excited that the *SAS* now incorporated poetry, added that, "Poetry, and public art in general, is not just important, but indispensable in our society. . . It is transformative and can alter the way we experience the world around us. It improves our quality of life, buoys our humanity, and challenges us to think deeply about ourselves and the things around us. It can remind us we are not alone. A moment like that, and a cup of coffee while waiting for a city bus, is an invitation to change the world."

Both Nevin and Hiscox saw the *Streetscape* as a place to make a connection with others by it casting a wide net out into the community and finding engagement with others who are drawn to a space not available prior. The artists may not be present physically, but they are alive in the panels, communicating through visual image or well-crafted words—it is a form of conversation, no less influential than an actual, in-person conversation. Think of the influence ancient poets and philosophers, long dead, still have . . . and often through imperfectly-translated materials.

EXEUNT/ENTRANCE: Open Theme Gives Way, Ecology Holds Sway. With Series 9, the *Streetscape* entered Phase 3. The new development was a shift away from an open theme; instead, this second wave of poets wrote to a predetermined topic with the focus or message of reuse/reduce/recycle. The City of Phoenix Public Works Department held the environment as a priority at that time and promoted a recycle program with a goal of

recycling 40% of household waste by 2020. Several other changes also occurred. For instance, no visual artists were chosen for new work; in fact, Series 8 was the last time visual artists were called to submit to *SAS* with new work. The art used for Series 9 came from a prior project, the *North Gateway Transfer Station Public Art Project:* Chris Colville's "Ocotillo's Snag" and Paho Mann's "Gifting" and "Metal by Color."

The "Call for Poets" asked for three poems, but they would *not* be used on the panels. They were for selection purposes only—to illustrate the abilities of the submitting poets. Once a poet was chosen, they would then create a short poem "to broaden public thinking about reuse, recycling and a greener environment"; hence, a new (temporary) name, *The Seventh Avenue Streetscape Green Haiku/Short Poetry Public Art Project.* They would also be using the above-mentioned existing photographic artwork by Colville and Mann for a poetic prompt. Once the poems were written, the poets then worked with a graphic artist who designed the background using the poems' content and the photographic images. The panels, when completed, displayed a continuity (between the photographic art on one side and the poem on the other) that had never been approached prior (see figs. 8-13).

Series 9, which ran from 2013 to 2014, displayed the work of four poets—Rebecca Seiferle of Tucson; David Chorlton, a prior recipient; Allyson Boggess; and Josh Rathkamp, a prior recipient. "Ocotillo's Snag," "Gifting," and "Metal by Color" were paired with Boggess' "Landscape with the Bag I Lost to the Wind," Chorlton's "Recycle-cycle," and Seiferle's "To Save What Can Be Saved," respectively, and installed on Seventh Avenue at the Melrose curve; Rathkamp's poem was displayed on a

privately owned billboard on Grand Avenue between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues (City of Phoenix, Office of Arts and Culture, 7th Avenue Streetscape-Series 9).

Again, the difference between this particular year and prior years was that the poems and their background graphics were informed by the original artwork (photography) on the reverse side of the panel. For example, Mann's "Ocotillo Snag" is a photo of an ocotillo in the foreground and a desert city (Phoenix) in the background; snagged atop the cactus' spines are unidentified pieces of perhaps cloth, thread, plastic, which mirror the story in the poem by Boggess. She wrote about a lost plastic bag, trash basically, that had been blown by the wind until it reached the destination of an ocotillo's highest point and became stuck on a spine resulting in a new headdress for the cactus in this now litter-altered landscape; her poem sits on a background of a cartoon-like rendering of an ocotillo.

The same format follows with Mann's work. In "Gifting," a colorful grid format depicts trinkets, small hearts, candy wrappers, matchbooks, and whatnots collected onto a black ground; Chorlton matches his poem to the art by speaking of ". . . the boxes in which love placed gifts," and coming then full circle when ending the poem, hence the poem's title, "Recycle-cycle," by making the point that when we recycle, we may not know where these items go "for which we have / no further use . . . only that they will return, clean / and filled with everything we'll empty out again." The poem itself set on a backdrop that appears to be an abstracted, simplified version of "Gifting,"—little, colorful, internally-lit boxes free-floating against black space and tiny colored stars, connected through the dangling, extended swirl from the final letter *e* on the word, *cycle*.

Fig. 8. Colville's "Ocotillo's Snag," Photograph, 2013,
City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture.

Fig. 9. Boggess' "Landscape with The Bag I Lost to The Wind," Panel 2013
City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture.

Fig. 10. Mann's "Gifting," Photograph, 2013,
City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture.

Fig. 11. Chorlton's "Recycle-cycle," *Streetscape* Panel, 2013,
City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture.

Mann's second work, "Metal by Color," is another grid, but of only six items, where the objects appear to be beverage cans altered in some way to stunt their full height and photographed out-of-focus to create a blurred and beautiful effect, with a Rothko

influence. Seiferle's poem picks up on that, telling of "an artist who fashions a green luminous Rothko moon / out of discarded containers." That same moon is placed above her poem on the upper right of her *SAS* panel, with a background of light blue stars on an evening sky, echoing the graphics on Chorlton's panel, just as her poem echoes the reuse/recycling sentiment of Chorlton's work in that she ends with how a child who leaves fingerprints on a plastic bottle he/she drank from that will, in turn, be drank from again by a child not yet born.

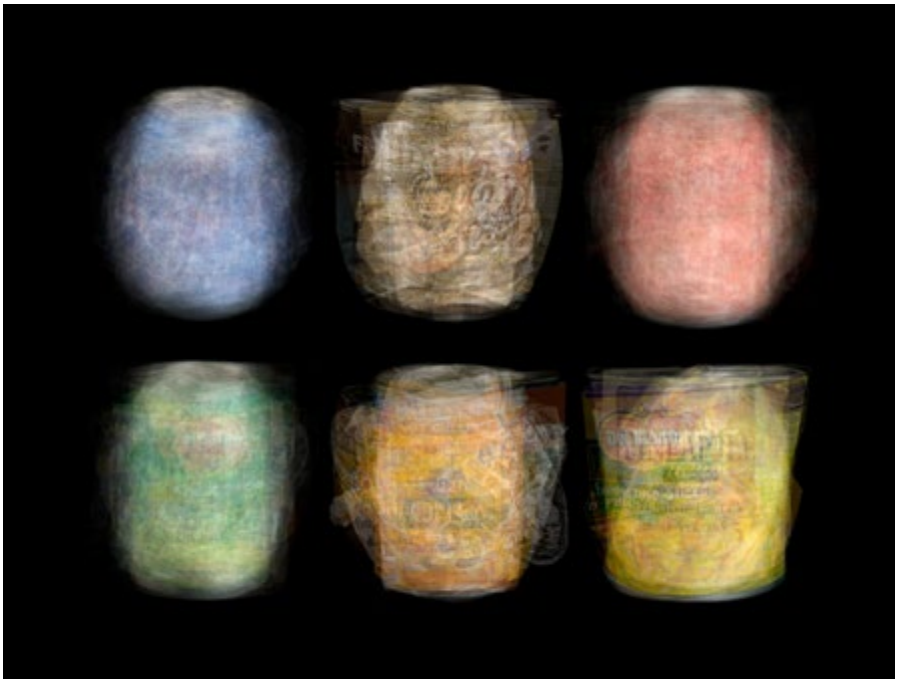

Fig. 12. Mann's "Metal by Color," Photograph, 2013,
City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture.

Fig. 13. Seiferle's "To Save What Can Be Saved," *Streetscape* Panel, 2013, City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture.

The outlier of this group was the fourth poem by Josh Rathkamp which was to have been placed in a whole other area physically disconnected to the Melrose District by several miles since the City of Phoenix had the opportunity to place both image and message out into the community on a privately-owned billboard, as noted above, and they took that opportunity. Personally, I have never seen the poem in that location, only the image/artwork online. In fact, the City of Phoenix Website for Series 9, from 2013-2014, still states, "The poem from the fourth poet, Joshua Rathkamp, *will* be displayed on a billboard on Grand Avenue between Roosevelt and the I-10 in the coming months (emphasis added)." That was eight or nine years ago.

Series 9 was the first of three series that would take a position on the environment toward recycling. It was also the first time poems were solicited for the purpose of selecting *poets* rather than selecting a *poem*; it was as if the poets were applying for the job position of poet and then given the work assignment: Write a brief poem, however

interpreted, about recycling and/or the environment, using one of the photographic prompts provided.

Considering that the city was not choosing a poem, but taking a chance that the poet could produce work on demand, prior experience and a portfolio were necessary, unlike the preceding years when a track record was not imperative as Arts and Culture had what they needed as soon received and selected poems. It was probably in the city's best interest that two of the four poets chosen had already exhibited poems in earlier incarnations of the *Streetscape* panels.[24] Also, two of the four were graduates of ASU's MFA program,[25] and Rebecca Seiferle, who was selected, is a well-known poet who was also the Tucson's Poet Laureate in 2012, a year before Series 9 manifested. The creative collaboration among photographers, poets, and a graphic artist was also a first, and produced a greater corresponding fit among the panels than in the past, partially due to everyone addressing a common theme—recycling, along with a "mother" image provided by the visual artists' initial photographs.

In Series 10, the city continued with the theme of recycling, and added to the intensity of that purpose by making even more changes from the previous year. The initial, most immediate change was that the Office of Arts and Culture ceased both "Calls for Artists/Calls for Poets"; however, on 29 August 2014, a call did go out for "two (2) experienced and accomplished Literary Arts Teaching Artists to work with a classroom of youth to write poems that broaden public thinking about reuse, recycling and a greener environment." They would be leading workshops with children ages 10-18 (this was later

[24] Both Chorlton and Rathkamp had poems chosen for Series 5 and Series 7, respectively.
[25] Boggess and Rathkamp.

modified to *only* eighth graders); the workshops resulted in poems to be exhibited on the *SAS* outdoor gallery panels and to be read at a Seventh Avenue community event.

Eve Vrla was again called upon as the graphic artist; she had a long history of creating backdrops for the *SAS* having done about half of them up to this date, which meant having collaborated with about nine poets thus far. In this project, the panels were made to resemble and read like an illustrated book, with the graphics matching the content of the poems; for example, "The First Word" was printed over a spinning Earth on a petroglyph watermark as the poem's text explored a lyric conflation of the ancient and modern worlds, colored by childlike observations and nostalgia.

According to the City of Phoenix April 24, 2015, District 4 Newsletter, poets Jia Oak Baker and Tomas Stanton worked in collaboration with eighth graders at Osborn Middle School by holding a series of workshops in which the goal for the students was "to learn about creating a greener, more sustainable environment through recycling, gardening, composting and reducing the waste that goes to city landfills." In order to create the poems, "the artists selected and edited what the students wrote about their experiences with recycling and the environment." Using the title as its first line, one of Baker's class poems begins, "The First Word / must have been earth, / the sound of it like dirt / turning over itself." Other poems from her class include, "At Sunset," set on a background of flowers over a watermark sun, and "Late Winter, Phoenix," after the style of poet Derek Walcott.

Stanton's class wrote "Mexican Gold," which was printed on a giant sun with rays streaming out, bordered by Shirley poppies, some in outline only; "Letter from the Ice Caps," on a background graphic of two penguins atop a melting ice floe with harp seals

looking on; and "If the Vacant Lot Could Speak," begins "If the Vacant Lot Could Speak: / It might recite a story of its glorious past."

Some of the same players were again involved in funding the project: The Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture in partnership with SAMA, and the Phoenix Public Works and Neighborhood Services Departments. It was also a time to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Phoenix Arts and Culture Commission, established by the Phoenix City Council "to advance the growth and development of the city's arts and cultural community."

There were six specific directives all listed on the City of Phoenix website, along with the full project description and timeline. The initial directive underscored the expectation that the teacher-poets would be developing a project curriculum in collaboration with the City of Phoenix Public Works Department focusing on "special recycling initiatives." The topic was determined as stated above—it was to feature "green." The thrust of this appointment was to mentor and teach. And for the first and only time, there was a mention of the "use of assessment and evaluation tools given to document impact of residency."[26] Prior to Series 10, there were no evaluative measures, but for anecdotal second-hand conversations and casual estimations of head counts at events.

In general, attendance at the poetry readings ran about 40-70, though the very first gathering (Series 4) had a very dedicated, but small audience of about 20 due to inclement weather. Larger crowds attended when the readings were set on First Friday—a huge monthly happening found at several downtown locations—or when the reading

[26] There was mention of assessment/evaluation in the guidelines, but no evidence that it was ever done.

was part of another multi-layered event. If primarily a poetry reading, it is often not nearly as robust in terms of spectators.

In an article dated April 22, 2015, "*Seventh Avenue Streetscape* Series 9 Dedication on April 29,"[27] it stated that a dedication would be held on a Wednesday evening at what is now considered an "outdoor community gallery" at Seventh and West Glenrosa Avenues, with a reading that featured both literary artists and their students.

The very next year, 2016, there were no calls for submission, nor a rotation of the poetry; instead, an event was held Friday night, same date as the year before, on 29 April, at Seventh Avenue and West Glenrosa, under the new name, "Poetry at the Melrose Curve." The event was sponsored by the Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture, in collaboration with "Reimagine Phoenix" and SAMA. This continuing project, according to the 2014-2019 Public Art Project Plan, featured recycling and the environment with a goal "to recycle 40% of household refuse by 2020" by expanding educational outreach through the arts (City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture 9).

District 4 Councilwoman Laura Pastor was invited to open the festivities, and noted, "I'm excited about the opportunity to showcase the important public art project that uses poetry to educate the public about our shared responsibility in caring for our environment." That April is National Poetry Month was not lost on Pastor as she added, "That we're able to offer this community event during National Poetry Month is particularly significant." The event featured poets Jia Oak Baker and Tomas Stanton, both of whom developed the current poetry display the year prior with students at Osborn Middle School; Jake Friedman, editor of Four Chambers Press; Hunter Hazelton, winner

[27] In the article, Series 10 was incorrectly labeled as Series 9.

of Arizona's Statewide Poetry Out Loud Contest for 2016; Leah Marche of Black Poet Ventures; and Shawnte Orion, founder and co-host of the Caffeine Corridor reading series. Poetry games were available for children, along with vintage typewriters where they could "pound out their own poems." This was basically a "fun, free, family-friendly" event presenting poetry as the main attraction (Unleash Your Inner Poet).

In sum, there were several important changes in Series 10. Some were due to the economic insecurity that had been brewing since the recession of 2008, and made the years following—2009, 2010, 2011—economically challenging, especially in relation to arts funding and fledging redevelopment as what was happening in the Melrose Neighborhood District. SAMA was originally supposed to be responsible regarding the monies slated for the panel display rotation, whether art or poetry or both, though they could not fiscally do that at this point (Lebow 2019). The lack of funding and of staffing (funding and staffing are directly proportional) were the main reasons that the panels were not changed out for three years; instead, the city held an annual event (mentioned above) to keep a connection with the community.

These next points are two of the four mentioned by Becker, the final two. Though only coincidentally related to *SAS* plans, as mentioned earlier, they add strength to his theoretical observations/practical applications, and they evolved in the following way: The thrust toward environmental action and public works education (recycling) by engaging young students to create poems through the use of literary arts teachers shifted the dynamic and the attention away from an individualistic, self-expression of artists/poets in the Modernist sense, connecting the artists (literary) with the community in a more intimate, hands-on manner along with enhancing the public appreciation of art

from the inside out by allowing those involved to become the artists themselves. It was no longer about the artist/poet, but the artist/poet + community = public art.

Participant/Observer—All Ages Welcome. When the "Call for Submissions" appeared in late 2017, it had almost been three years since the panels were last changed out. New work was usually presented annually, so there was a dismal atmosphere hovering around the *Streetscape*—maybe because the holdover was not intended, perhaps foreshadowing the public project would soon be abandoned in spite of the fact that the poetry had been magnificent. It would be a loss. I had visited the most recent poems when they were first installed. Notes from my journal dated 26 May 2015:

> When I walked over to the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* after securing an iced coffee at Copper Star, a corner cafe in the Melrose District, I was already determined not to like the poems—they would be written by schoolchildren under the guidance of their teachers, whom I'm sure edited heavily. Prior poems were by emerging and professional poets.

I go on to describe all six poems after copying each one, by hand, into my notebook. Before I had read even half, I was sobbing from their impact. They were perfect. And I was still on the outside looking in. I still had not had a poem chosen for the *Streetscape,* despite almost a decade of submitting. But my perspective was about to change, and as a direct consequence of that change, so would my research approach.

The requirements for submission for Series 11 came with more restrictive elements than prior: short poems limited to a maximum of 50 words, "more substantive than haiku," no end rhymes, and a theme underscoring sustainability. The restrictions were not on creativity; in fact, invention of all kinds and unexpected forms were

encouraged. The inaugural Phoenix Poet Laureate, Rosemarie Dombrowski, was reigniting the *Streetscape*; it was to be part of the city's "Reimagine Phoenix" effort, with the same specific recycling goal to be reached by 2020 as mentioned above.

Another change was dividing the submissions into three age groups: 18-25, 25-55, and 55+. This was Dombrowski's idea in hopes that it would result in greater diversity among participants and more accurately reflect the age range representing the community. The two highest scoring poems in each age category would be displayed on the panels. It promised a year minimum exposure of the poem on an illustrated billboard, a celebration during National Poetry Month (April) including a reading of the poems, and a $750 award. These promises had become standard for the winning poets.

In the series prior, the visual art component was excluded for a creative, non-monetary reason—the city opted to have a talented graphic artist work with the poets rather than glue poetry onto the reverse side of whatever the visual artists had done (Lebow 2019).[28] In this next series, *all* six panels would hold poems; there would be no visual art apart from the background graphics supporting the poetry. However, instead of the same graphic artist working with all poets/poems, Dombrowski took it a further by hiring individual artists through Canary,[29] a Gould Evans award-winning design center located in the warehouse district of downtown Phoenix, to create companion backgrounds for the selected poems. In a recent interview, Dombrowski revealed that she made this decision after studying the previous panels and deciding they looked more like

[28]Ed Lebow, Public Art Program Director for the City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture, assured that in the future, there may be an installation at the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* with visual art only, full circle to where it began. Or something entirely different, unique. Musicians, maybe—recordings.
[29] Canary won the 2019 design award for Landscape Icon from *Sources for Design* magazine.

"PowerPoint" slides, very basic; she wanted art that was "provocative and complementary"—something that would catch attention (2018).

Each poet was assigned his/her own artist, rather than in the past where a graphic artist designed all the backgrounds in a series, resulting in continuity at best or an almost interchangeable uniformity at worst. All the artists, poets, and some of the administrative staff gathered together when critiques were given on the initial workups. Everyone was asked to join in no matter whose poem or whose art. Collaboration was the means to a quality product. Revisions on the art were made and emailed to everyone for additional input. The result: Six masterful creations—each very different from the other, yet the visual aesthetics so integrated with their assigned poem that the combination of text and graphics became a co-creation, and so, for the first time, the artists' names were included on the bottom of the panels with the poems. A guided tour of all six in the current rotation of the Melrose's outdoor gallery starts here:

When driving north on Seventh Avenue from Indian School Road, after passing under the Melrose Arch, the first panel to come into view is "Desert Medicine" by Jenai Longstaff from the youngest age group; the poem is placed onto a black and white graphic designed by Daniel Sagadraca. It is an address to environmental damage and what is left in its place—something quite spare and as spartan as her imagistic, lyrical poem. Facing South, its singular, central graphic image—a hand wrapped in a diamondback rattlesnake—can easily be seen from Seventh Avenue, but Seventh is fast, busy, and dangerous, so none of the poems are readable from the road.[30]

[30] Dombrowski purposely solicited shorter poems, 50 words and under, so that they might be read without difficulty, but in actuality, the poems can only be read by stopping and standing in front of them.

On the other side of the panel, facing North, is “Environmental Racism” by Joel Salcido. The poem is superimposed on an aerial street map of Phoenix, painted in watercolor, and designed by Amanda Harper. The top side of the screen represents the wealthier neighborhoods, with lots of green, but as the eye moves toward the bottom, it becomes more and more brown wherein Salcido makes his statement that the neighborhoods on the West Side are less attractive as the population along with the land gets “browner and browner.”

A few steps north, a brief, lyric poem “Vigil” by Jake Friedman reveals the possibility of a future elsewhere in the universe after this planet has been darkened to death. The panel shows an abstract of Earth in the bottom left-hand corner; in the upper left, his title uses a date stamp as a subtitle: 5:27 PM PST, Friday, December 22, 2017. It references the SpaceX launch, its last mission of that year, which sent forth ten satellites into Earth’s lower orbit, basically altering the appearance of sky constellations due to satellite pollution. The graphics were executed by Dylan Millsap. Both Jake and Joel are in the mid-range age group.

On the opposite side of “Vigil” is a poem by Devin Kate Pope, another in the youngest age group. Her poem, “West of Selfish” faces Seventh Avenue; it is placed on a background— photographic and colorful, brightest of all the panels—illustrating hope as her poem invites others to help benefit Earth through the giving of themselves. The graphics were done by Elisabeth Populo.

Cross the street at Glenrosa to find the poems by the two oldest poets; Paul Morris and I share opposite sides of a panel. Morris wrote “What Left, What Stayed:”—his title is embedded into the poem itself, which is a short, expressive list poem about cleaning

out the house and the remembrance of things, with a specific nostalgia for baseball cards and Barbie dolls. Designed by Ryan Fickenscher, the backdrop is a simple, illustrated drawing with marker fill-in emphasis, overlaid onto a subtle watermark of newspaper column text for more visual depth. The poem faces Seventh Avenue directly.

The final poem is mine, “To Make a Moon Ladder: Instrucciones” (see fig.14). It faces away from the street toward the innards of the neighborhood at a bus stop gracing the parking lot of the Boycott Bar, a minor landmark in and of itself. The background design by Nicole Norgren is a play on the Lunar Calendar. However, the moon phases are shown as a movement of triangles instead of circles to echo the poem’s directive to make a ladder from plastic bags folded into three-sided shapes, which are then connected until made long enough to reach the moon, with some additional information on how long it takes for plastic to decompose.

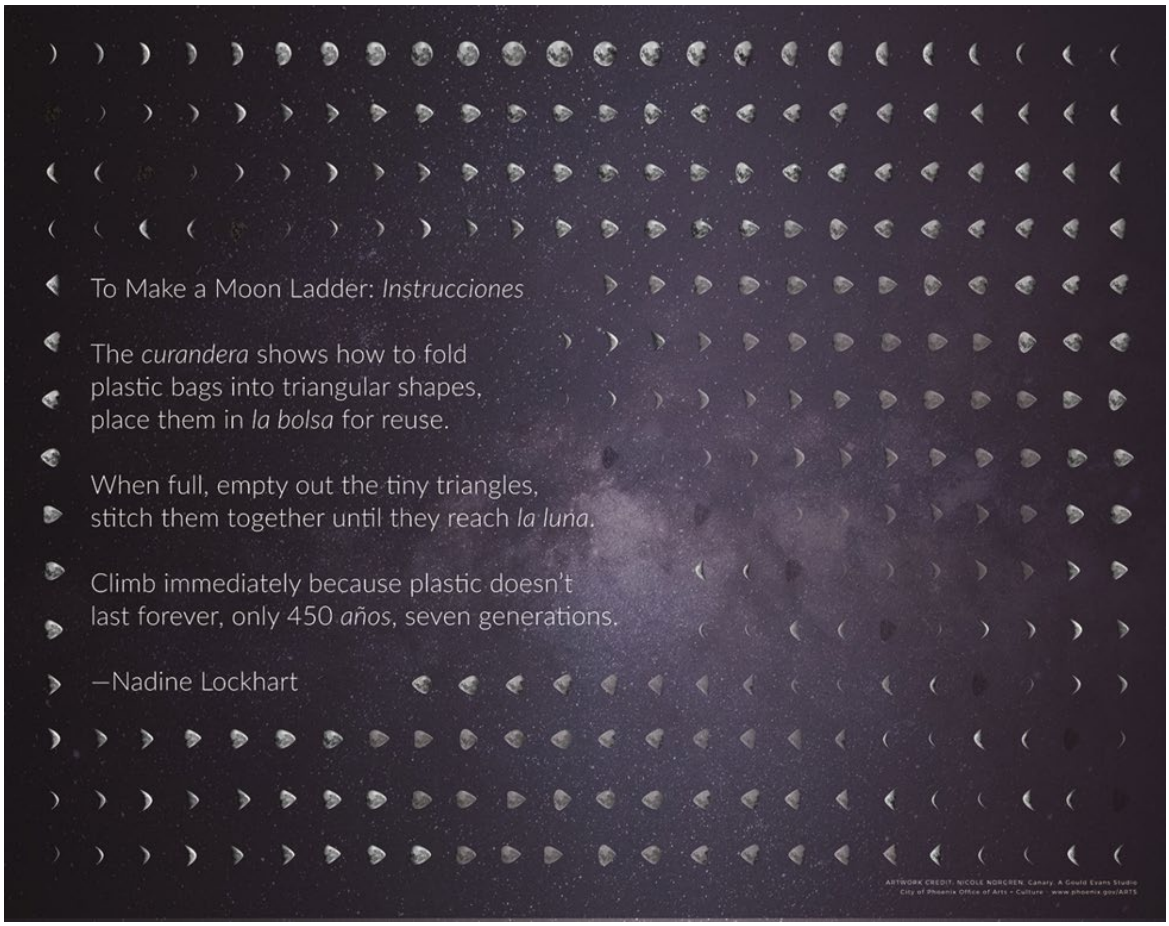

Fig. 14. Lanier's "To Make a Moon Ladder: Instrucciones," *Streetscape* Panel, 2018, City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture.

As a summary update, *SAS* was in limbo. The 2018 panels had not been changed out for almost five years—a record. Nor had there been any revival event as in the past to ensure continuity and connection with the public. The neighborhood itself, like many in central Phoenix, did not adhere to its initial commitment in developing affordable housing, and real estate has skyrocketed. Many business owners who had a hand with the *SAS* project and Melrose revitalization, thankfully, are still in place, and several new businesses moved into the area.

Currently, according to the City of Phoenix Arts and Culture website, *SAS* was in a maintenance phase. Renovation began early in 2023, and was completed by summer.

The original fabricator was contracted for replacements, restorations, and upgrades. The new works does not include poetry, but is a combination of art and educational information from the sunBLOCK public art project and the Heat Awareness campaign, funded by an ongoing partnership between ASU and the City of Phoenix. The sunBLOCK project consists of umbrellas designed by fourteen commissioned artists (https://www.phoenix.gov/arts/public-art-program/explore-the-collection/public-art).

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to explore how ten poets, whose work was selected for the *SAS* over the last fifteen years, gave meaning to the *Streetscape* project through their lived experience of the phenomenon. The topic and its aligned methodology required extensive review of the literature and other research approaches, which provided background, context, and direction for this study; this kind of review was ongoing throughout the remainder of the dissertation process.

For the literature review, the bibliographical selection included hundreds of books, journals and periodicals, newspaper articles, public services announcements, Internet resources, dissertations, monographs, and an Arizona Town Hall publication specifically addressing arts and culture in Arizona. Some sources were accessed through the Arizona State University library, other college libraries, public libraries, and city archives, either in person or online. Sources were accessed also through EBSCO, JSTOR, ILLIAD, and ProQuest, among others. Additional research information was obtained through interviews (in person, online, telephone), graduate courses (Autoethnography as Research, Aesthetic Theory, and Public Art), introductory survey classes taken for review (Introduction to Anthropology and Introduction to Philosophy), attending events in real time (in person or electronically), and observing/taking fieldnotes at site locations. No delimiting timeframe was used at the beginning of the research because of the need for historical context to mark development and changes in the world of public art.

Development and change notwithstanding, some things stay the same; for example, much time was spent on two issues—funding and defining public art. At a

tipping point where I thought neither couldn't matter less to my study, a recent article (see below) was released about a public art piece in Toronto that was not be granted public art status by the city in order to fulfill a *percent for art* requirement for the contractor, regardless of its popularity among the public; thus indicating the debate, "What is public art?" still rages on, though more covertly in other forms such as, "What is the value of public art?" or "Are aesthetics for the good of society?" Funding is still a major factor in public art, so important that it even affected the *SAS* (panels were not changed out annually due to Covid-19 and other challenges). Though it was interesting that comments on financial aspects of public art did not come up in the research interviews beyond poets stating appreciation for receiving payment for their poems.

This literature review covers two major content areas. The first section focuses on public art, with a subsection on poetry as public art; the second section covers quantitative research (briefly and in general), then phenomenology as a philosophy and a methodology, and finally, specific research on poets and phenomenology. The review closes with the statement of question. Due to controversy, there is an additional section regarding Heidegger's anti-Semitism and fascist bent found at the end of the Chapter 4.

PUBLIC ART

"It is difficult / to get the news from poems / yet men die miserably every day / for lack / of what is found there," wrote poet Williams Carlos Williams. If we take this statement as true, it expresses an actual need for poetry in our lives. Not only has poetry been a feature of humanity since antiquity, finding its expression by the construction of connections through different aesthetic and social contexts, it is also evidenced by the proliferation of poetry in its various forms, uncountable venues, and new incarnations

throughout today's world. There has been an astronomical expansion in the education of poets from the MFA explosion and formal writing certificate programs to community and private workshops, summer programs, and event conferences lasting for days. Poetry readings have increased and include "page," performance, SLAM, and Spoken Word, with the blurring of lines among these oral traditions. Publications are ubiquitous and present printed poetry through small "zines," academic presses, commercial enterprises, and self-publishing venues, some printed only once and others regularly fly off the presses for decades. Plus, the influence of the digital revolution has created online classes, electronic publications, virtual readings in real time allowing an audience from anywhere and everywhere, blog sites, and submission portals (most sites no longer accept hardcopy). And finally, during the recently erupted prevalence of the poet laureate, even Arizona has appointed our first Poet Laureate, Alberto Rios, and our inaugural Phoenix Poet Laureate, Rosemarie Dombrowski.[31]

Although this grand listing illustrates how poetry finds its way into the public sphere, there is yet another addition, which is poetry as public art. While not the specific focus of this study, it is tied to the often-debated question: *What is Public Art?* The rhetorical juxtaposition of "public/art" makes the term an easy target if coming in from a negative angle; hence, the old saw to whom exact attribution cannot be found: *Public Art is neither "public" nor "art,"* critically implying it fails at its role to engage the community and fails again at its ability to reach anything more than a mediocre form aesthetically. More than thirty years ago, public art administrator Jerry Allen noted that

[31] In a New York Times article, Poet Billy Collins, former United States and New York State laureate stated, "I've been to places where there is a poet laureate for every ZIP code . . . it's out of control."

more than two and a half decades after Philadelphia became the first city to pass the "Percent-for-Art" ordinance, "We still are unable to define exactly what public art is, or ought to be" (246). Around the same time, art critic, editor, and curator Patricia Phillips complained about the field of public art in that it was "without clear definitions, without a constructive theory, and without coherent objectives" (1988: 93). A full two decades later, specialist in public art/museum studies Cher Krause Knight agrees, "such definitions, theory, and objectives still elude us . . ." (23). And as recent as 2018, Slate Asset Development out of Toronto, a strong advocate for the "Percent-for-Public-Art" Program, topped their condo project with pink neon letters reading *Junction* as a gateway signpost to the neighborhood of the same name (Chan), much like the Melrose Arch announces its neighborhood, the neighborhood where *SAS* is located. According to Slate, the neon construction was originally to be only a temporary placeholder to future art, but it was so popular that it was installed permanently; even so, the city said it was "not public art" and would not qualify for the percentage program (Hague). Again, no consensus on what constitutes public art. The difficulty, even after decades of growth, has been in finding a universally accepted concept for what it is.[32]

Decisions are made regarding acceptance and funding of artwork for inclusion in public art spaces, yet there is nothing definitive when regarding public art definitionally. One explanation is that the meaning of public art is culture and site based, shifting with time, place, role, or function; therefore, the question can only be answered in flux, dependent upon ever-evolving locations and values. Scholar, curator, and writer of art

[32] This lack of definitional consensus is not limited to public art. Psychology, for one, could not adequately determine the nature or essence of "parenting" after a reviewing decades of research (Schaffer).

and architecture John Beardsley echoes this same sentiment by stating, "public values are not universal, but a function of their epoch and locale . . . An art that expresses the values of all the people is impossible to achieve" (1981b: 43-4); therefore, using an approach that is dynamic and functional, such as Becker's formula for public art success, makes more sense. According to Becker, public art can be considered the impetus for a variety of influences which can be categorized into four areas: It can engage civic dialogue and community; attract attention and economic benefit; connect artists with communities; and enhance public appreciation of art (6).

Another major concern is the difference between public art and art in public places. Hilde Hein[33] imagistically asserts, "The sheer presence of art out-of-doors or in a bus terminal or a hotel reception area does not automatically make that art public—no more than placing a tiger in a barnyard would make it a domestic animal," (1996: 4); Knight backs the same sentiment stating, "physical access is an empty gesture if the public does not feel other forms of accessibility are within its grasp too" (x); thus, the creating a more multifaceted criteria for consideration than placement or accessibility before a work is justly labeled public art. In a simple distillation of more complex descriptions[34] delineating public art from art in public, Becker contends that the former accounts for its context (5).

[33] Associate Professor of Philosophy, Emerita at Holy Cross College, and author of several books on museums in transition and public art.

[34] Other ways of defining context: Knight argues ". . . we can best understand art's public functions when we consider the interrelationship between content and audience; what art has to say, to whom it speaks, and the multiple messages it may convey" (viii). Phillips sees art as public when "the idea of public [becomes] as the genesis and subject for analysis . . . because of the kinds of questions it chooses to ask or address" (1992: 298).

To summarize on public art thus far, its definition is best applied when considered as functional, dynamic, and flexible, along with its relationship to the greater context in which it is placed (time, space, and cultural aspects). The key players in all phases are funding sources—private/public, commercial/residential, individual/institutional; creatives—artists, architects, designers, fabricators, poets; government agencies—arts and culture, transportation departments, law enforcement; and the public-at-large as a participating element of the end product, though sometimes included in the process. Each of these areas have their own access point, agenda, and level of agency, which can vary, often depending on the stage of the process. The largest say from the public is usually after-the-fact with critiques both positive and negative, sometimes so much the latter that it necessitates the art being removed such as with Serra's now infamous *Tilted Arc* (Balfe and Wyszomirski). In general, data regarding impact, reception, or ongoing interaction with public art is anecdotal with little formal research to gauge public response, whether accepting, rejecting, or somewhere between the two.

Looking at Public Art from Other Angles. Still keeping in mind that there is no agreement on public art *definitionally*, there is a general acceptance that public art is "good" as in having a positive effect, yet the evidence is rarely substantiated and mostly anecdotal. *SAS*, for instance, has never done an exit survey during any of its almost annual "unveiling of the panels" events, nor any formal follow-up evaluation since its inception almost twenty years ago. And if there were some sort of marketing research format, what would be measured, and how?

Cameron Cartiere, Dean of Graduate Studies, Emily Carr University of Art + Design, pioneered an ambitious plan to chart public art using both quantitative and

qualitative designs. She used seven methodological approaches and a multitude of assessment tools. I will not go into the details, but I mention it because I have engaged with each technique, on some level, while evaluating *SAS* for my own needs because some of these tools were ethnographic and/or phenomenological in nature. Her move was toward something akin to how my research progressed by allowing the criteria for evaluation to remain flexible rather than rigidly adhering to fixed, a priori criteria; evaluations were adjusted according to emerging findings (Cartiere 13). Although her research intent was to maintain an open stance, measurement of impact, social or otherwise, puts the yardstick far into the quantitative, predetermined field; whereas, I preferred to seek what, at the start of my investigation, may be a complete unknown.

In "Stop Measuring, Start Understanding," Francesco Chiaravalloti, Assistant Professor of Cultural Policy at the University of Amsterdam, suggested a 180-degree change in approach when accounting for the value of art: practice over theory, context over generalization, and process of understanding over urgency of application (131, 136). He also argued for a more ethnographic turn to discover the value in art, but noted that any "definitively answering" of such a question was evasive as the new (research, understanding) will keep altering the field; however, "limited but valid contributions" were possible through engagement in descriptive, cultural terms (Chiaravalloti 139-140). And my intent was to do as much—to find meaning in public art attributed by a selected population who were involved in a local neighborhood project.

Poetry as Public Art. I moved on from the never-ending saga of defining public art to poetry as public art, but as the years went by, the need to justify or prove text was a valid public art form became moot as more and more projects involved poems or poetic texts,

with or without any other attendant art forms. Prior to that, text was mostly found on explanatory plaques providing information about a public art piece. However, currently and in recent past, textual elements in public art has found its place, and nationally-speaking, its place is throughout the United States: New York City's *Poetry in Motion* (1992) brought poems to subway and rail commuters; the Berkeley Poetry Walk (2003) exhibits 120 panels of local poets' poems embedded into the sidewalk on Addison Street in downtown Berkeley; downtown Houston's Metro Transit Authority Project "Texts in Context" (2004) used 100 texts (historical documents, poetry, and prose) chosen from authors with a Texas connection, and then engraved the texts on two-foot square granite paving stones; and Boston's "Raining Poetry" project (2016) placed invisible poems into the sidewalk which are revealed when wet. Some of these textual installations predated the *Streetscape*, others came after, though all mentioned above were additive to the sites, and those sites were already fully developed neighborhoods, apart from New York, which was a transit project, not a place project. The poetry was integrated into the cities design and most could not be transferred to another location, say another city in another state in that much of the work reflected local and/or historical aspects of place and were created by local poets who were influencing and influenced by their city.

The Phoenix metropolitan area also had constructed several poetic public installations including *Passage, A Constellation of Cultures,* and the *Maryvale Pool Project. Passage* is a multifaceted installation located outside of the South Mountain Community College Library. It is comprised of *Acoustic Chairs* situated in an adjacent plaza; the chairs "recite" recorded poems when motion sensors are activated. They also have steel letters cascading down their exterior to encourage visitor interaction by finding

hidden words in a Scrabble-like game. In addition to the chairs, there are *Poetry Trellises* on pedestrian walkways to and from the library; the metal trellises were formed from cut-out letters welded together, which cast shadows of couplets beneath or to the side of these canopies, depending on the time of day as the movement of the sun determines the text placement as it would the shadow of a sundial gnomon.

A Constellation of Cultures is an installation inside the Ocotillo Branch Library. The project began when the City of Phoenix Library Department decided that the Ocotillo Branch would benefit from a public art project focusing on the themes of "literacy, multiculturalism, and discovery" while also producing a more engaging environment (Americans for the Arts). The interior portion of the piece was created by replacing the library's ceiling lighting with 39 discs lights suspended along a grid of ceiling beams (Americans for the Arts). In the center of the discs are the names of authors, and on the circumference of the discs are quotations by those authors, written in both English and Spanish. Quotes range widely from Gandhi to Geronimo to Goethe, Austen to Einstein, Shakespeare to Malcolm X . . . even Dr. Seuss is included. The only featured writer was contemporary author and poet Alberto Rios,[35] who was also commissioned to write the poem etched in glass on the entryway doors. The controls for the ceiling lights are contained in a wooden facsimile of an old card catalogue files box with live electrical switches which can be turned on or off by library patrons; each switch illuminates a ceiling light/quote/author. Finally, a skylight hovers high above the checkout station and serves as a variation on the smaller quote-holding discs. The words

[35] Interesting to note that Rios' first public reading was at the Ocotillo Branch Library, this very same library. He is currently the inaugural Poet Laureate of Arizona.

READ and WRITE are set perpendicular against each other on an X and Y-axis intersecting the disc; the words "I–YOU-WE-THEY-ME-HE-SHE-MY circle the circumference of the center of the disc. The intersection symbolically illustrating the recursive process of knowledge acquisition through reading and writing (Krivanek.Breaux.Art.Design.LLC).

In 2009-2010, the *Maryvale Pool Project,* part of the City Parks system, worked with the City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture to solicit poems suitable for the community pool, such as those with the theme of water. The poems were sandblasted into the walkway and printed on signage around the locker room changing areas.

Unlike Seventh Avenue, which was a community-driven, rotational, public art gallery built into the *Streetscape's* infrastructure, all three projects mentioned above were initiated either by the library or the park system and its textual art was permanently placed as an *addition.* Though they certainly were not "plop art,"[36] the library installations could probably be *plopped* into any library and the Maryvale poems would work at any public or even private pool. Also, these public art pieces, often constructed using unique, architectural designs with the purpose of enhancing their community structures, were already places/spaces serving a purpose, and it was these intentions of purpose which populated and continue to populate libraries and parks rather than to experience the public art itself. On the other hand, Seventh Avenue was a declining neighborhood (space) in need of transformation through various placemaking techniques,

[36] A generic abstract sculpture disconnected to its environment, also called "Turds in the plaza" as coined by architect James Wines (Knight 8).

including public art—public art serving as the impetus to restoring the social and economic connections necessary for redevelopment.

To conclude, given the examples above are only a small sampling of how text, poetic or otherwise, is now part of the public art canon, there is no longer a need to argue the point. The proof is in its usage, which has become universal. Locally, Phoenix libraries have added more entrance/dedication poems; the Metro Light Rail includes public art at every station stop, some of it as text; and poetry readings have become common practice as part of community events. New forms engage the public as novelty pop-ups such as poems heard inside decommissioned "telepoem" booths where the curious may "dial-a-poem" while visiting Bisbee, Flagstaff, or Mesa, Arizona (Cline). Vintage vending machines, repurposed to dispense art and poems rather than snacks or cigarettes, are found locally, nationally, and around the world (Nelson). Many events, from corporate Christmas parties to neighborhood street fairs, set up classic, manual typewriters staffed with poets to create poems on demand. Public art is no longer thought of as only the visual, and it has come a long way from when the only text was an explanatory plaque in front of the proverbial man on a horse.[37]

[37] Historically and predictively, the first public art in Arizona—Solon Borglum's memorial sculpture to Captain William "Bucky" O'Neill and the Rough Riders—was an equestrian bronze on a granite boulder with a concrete base, and still stands today on the Yavapai Courthouse Plaza in Prescott. Ironically, this *horse and hero* statue from the turn of the last century closely fits into Becker's four-point profile of successful public art. It was a community effort. After O'Neill's death, local businessmen began fundraising, which included the sale of "Bucky O'Neill" cigars by a Prescott cigar maker. School children donated their pennies, and by 1905, a legislative appropriation of $10,000 allowed for its commission in 1906, and a dedication was held in 1907, an event reporting thousands in attendance (Lebow and Homer 173). This memorial continues to engage the community in a town that exalts the West as a cultural heritage/living history. Prescott's renown World's Oldest Rodeo® held annually since 1888 comes to mind as part of that identity. And its Courthouse Plaza was selected as one of the first ten "Great Public Places in America" as it still continues to be a working town square, "heavily used" by residents and tourists, and "carefully maintained" according to Mike Bacon, a community planner with the City of Prescott (American Planning Association). Maintenance often is the missing link of funding after acquisition, but not in this case. A rededication occurred in 1982 and again in 1998 (Art Inventories Catalogue).

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Since I have been working on this project in one way or another over the last ten years, some of my questions and concerns have timed out as far as relevancy, at least from their original form; in short, inquiries are trending in other directions. For example, "What is public art?" has turned into questions that are less definitional and more dynamic, functional, and even aesthetic, such as "What is public art's impact (on community, on economics, on art education)?" or "What is the value of public art? (artistically/aesthetically, psychologically/sociologically)" with an unspoken assumption that "What is public art?" would be obvious to anyone.[38] And as to whether poetry is public art, that question has answered itself by poems cropping up all over the world during the past thirty-plus years as part of the public art scene. While my research in both public art and poetry as public art gave me an historical foundation and broad background, it was no longer my primary focus. My primary interest had shifted to yet another area lacking information—the point of view of the artist/poet in relation to meaning given and understanding *being-in-the-world* through a particular phenomenon of public art, in this case, *SAS*.

As noted in the beginning of this chapter, I had cast a vast net across the entire field of public art, chronologically and categorically. I was also trying to stuff the roundness of art and aesthetics into the proverbial square quantitative basket; the fit was uneasy, but I did learn much about art administration through the lens and impact of politics and funding from before the Depression Era up through the present. As I was

[38] This assumption is reminiscent of Supreme Court Justice Stewart's infamous quote, "I know it when I see it," regarding the definition of pornography during a 1964 obscenity case, *Jacobellis v. Ohio*.

conjuring ways to assign numbers and statistics to poetry as public art, one of my advisors suggested writing in the first person with a narrative bent or as a narrative inquiry. I was uncomfortable using the "I" statement because of an educational foundation heavy in mathematics and the sciences; however, I pressed on with it. Soon, a peer suggested arts-based research (ABR); I read Leavy's entire foundational text *Method Meets Art,* cover to cover, in addition to many associative articles, which led me to audit the graduate class Autoethnography as Research, which led to more texts, more articles, and my own preliminary writings as I discovered alternative approaches. Although it was enticing to think about creating a "research" poem to harness the experiential essence of *SAS,* possibly by gathering lines and themes from the original display poems, along with the participants' interview data patterns into a long, cento-like tome, I had less ABR and more traditional phenomenological leanings for this project. Putatively, I should have leaned strongly *toward* ABR as the arts, and poetry in particular, are revered by phenomenologists for possessing "the power to convey true knowledge about our human condition" (Zimmermann 54). Heidegger and Gadamer both saw the arts as a "medium for the expression of meaning that leads to understanding" in that art can convey quickly and more completely that which cannot be conveyed by discourse (Dibley, Dickerson and Duffy 26). Consistent with Heidegger, ABR attempts to "extend beyond the limiting constraints of discursive communication in order to express meaning that otherwise would be ineffable" (Barone and Eisner 1). Polkinghorne, in summarizing Dilthey, states "The most substantial sources of knowledge about the life experience are the expressions of life—for example, the pictures painted, the letters written, the poems and the stories composed . . ." (32).

Moreover, ABR and phenomenological methodology are not mutually exclusive; ABR[39] can use any of several qualitative methods for gathering and analyzing data, and then proceed with a creative outcome through artistic expression such as poetry, music, dance, and visual arts (Leavy ix). For example, if I were to take the ABR route of poetic inquiry after completing my data capturing as planned, it would have resulted in a long poem as the capstone to the dissertation. And to my surprise, that is exactly what happened. A composite poem or cento, found on page 170, is the coda to the dissertation. It was composed using the voices of all the poets I interviewed; there words were taken from the written transcripts containing their responses to the central research question.

Back to my process: I took a couple more classes in basic anthropology to make myself familiar with the terminology should I have decided to follow an auto-ethnographic path. I started reading, reviewing, and researching basic texts and articles on qualitative inquiry and research design, particularly paying attention to exemplars of each method. Finally, I discussed each of the five most viable contenders, in detail, with my chair—Narrative Research, Phenomenology, Grounded Theory, Ethnography, and Case Study—though I was still unwilling to leave the quantitative behind; I was thinking there might be a mixed-method option.

I could have worked with any of the qualitative methods that I have mentioned, but there were subtle differences among them which determined my direction. Narrative inquiry, though not used as the primary methodology, would have been useful in providing some of the intersecting methods it has with phenomenology, but narrative

[39] ABR practices are a set of methodological tools used by researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research, including data generation, analysis, interpretation, and representation (Leavy ix).

focus is story, and that was not my focus; yet, illustrative stories were told during the interview process. Grounded Theory is searching for a theory as its name suggests, though some procedural methods overlap with phenomenology. Ethnography leans more towards a description and interpretation of culture, and I certainly find the culture of poets, my tribe, an interest and a bonding opportunity, but it was not the direction for my research. Case Study works through an issue as its core; there was some correspondence with phenomenology in studying an event, but its goal was not the same. I eliminated all but phenomenology because phenomenology—philosophically and methodologically—was custom-made for my study. It focuses on *meaning.*

The work of phenomenology is to understand the essence of an experience by studying those who share the experience of a phenomenon (event, object). The method of gathering data is the interview, along with field observations, documents, and even art. Art. Each poet in this study has created art in the form of a poem, and those poems created the *SAS*—the *SAS* being both cause and effect of the poems. The poets, the poems, the public art project, and the public itself are inextricably linked.

In sum, though I believed the foundational material regarding the inception, progression, and presentation of *SAS* was important, as well as its impact on and interactions with the community, I also believed that *SAS* would benefit from a research approach that delved deep into the meaning *SAS* has given to the creators of the poems housed within its panels. Coming now from a personal perspective as a participant-observer, I wished to explore the *lived* experience of the *SAS* phenomenon through semi-structured interviews with selected poets, followed by proper coding and assessment of the subjective accounts (collective subjectivities), along with hermeneutical/interpretive

analysis to arrive at a collective objectivity, which furthers the knowledge base of understanding the lifeworld we inhabit. I was hoping it might even result in an answer to the question, "What is public art?," but with a phenomenological twist.

Phenomenology. As stated earlier, phenomenology is a philosophy and a qualitative methodology which seeks meaning in the *lived* experience of the life world through thick description of a phenomenon, thus revealing its "essences" (Creswell and Poth 67, 75; van Manen, RLE 18-19). According van Manen, a phenomenologist uses "personal experience as a starting point" (van Manen, RLE 54); therefore, one of the expected inclusions in phenomenological research would be direct involvement by the researcher, unlike the so-called objective, non-invasive researcher role in quantitative work. This is why I have included information regarding the research path taken up to this point.

Phenomenology generally begins with a reflective narrative[40] of the researcher's personal experience explaining interest in a phenomenon (what brings them) and how they may occupy a favored position to do such a study (what they bring) (Frechette, Bitzas and Aubry 5; Randles 12). The actual data collection is completed through in-depth interviews, and possibly focus groups, with an attendant journal for recording reflections and other information, *which become part of the study,* and may even influence the study while it is ongoing, sometimes resulting in procedural changes; subjects themselves may also particpate after-the-fact, in the "checks and balance" of the data by reviewing their submitted descriptions for accuracy (Frechette, Bitzas and Aubry 7-8). Finally, the data is coded, excerpted, categorized, themed, analyzed, interpreted, and

[40] This would be considered the first entry into the reflective journal, an essential researcher's tool for documenting self-reflection (Frechette, Bitzas and Aubry 5). An example of this kind of narrative is found in the first few pages of Chapter 1 of my dissertation.

synthesized into a written report in accordance with phenomenological procedures (Frechette, Bitzas and Aubry 9; Randles 12).

There is more than enough literature on basic to advanced phenomenology, from the accepted formal inception with Husserl, his student Heidegger, and other theorists, such as Gadamer, Giorgi, and Merleau-Ponty, to instructional materials with step-by-step guildlines for performing phenomenological research, while often stating in the same text that there is no method but for what a researcher may design on his or her own. Phenomenological methodology is most used in education, nursing, and the social sciences, such as psychology and sociology, and some of the arts, especially performance (Creswell and Poth 9-10); therefore, I read studies that were not in my field, such as a nursing dissertation, *Aging Among Women with Disabilities* (Tracie Culp Harrison) and and a nursing study, "Cognitive Representations of AIDS" (Elizabeth H. Anderson and Margaret Hull Spencer), then followed the format of their phenomenological line of logic as a template for my own research. Phenomenological methodology, wherever found, can be adjusted to fit almost any discipline where the focus of the research is on gaining the essential meaning of a phenomenon. Method and methodology are both discussed, in detail, in the next chapter.

Poets and Phenomenology

If the search engine was given two categories, "phenomenology/lived experience" and "poe*" (for poem, poet, poetry, poetics), as many as tens of thousands of resource titles will fill the screen, but add a third—"public art"—to the mix, and no results show. A bit of exaggeration as some search engines may list a few materials, but on further review, those materials were not usable. In short, I can find research articles, texts, even

dissertations that study poems/poets/poetry and phenomenology, but nothing exists that closely coincides with my project.

There were *appearances* of similarity, but the phenomenon was never a match, nor are the research questions. For example, I found only two dissertation studies, submitted within the last 15 years, involving poets *and* phenomenology, including the lived experience regarding their poetry. Two. The titles were *Awakening: The Lived Experience of Creativity as Told by Eight Young Creators* (Champa) and *Culturally Responsive Poetry: The Lived Experience of African American Adolescent Girl Poets* (J. N. Bacon). The former was focused on creativity asking, "How do young creators describe the many aspects of their lived experiences with creativity from its awakening to its current state?" (13) and the latter was concerned with self-empowerment, "What is the lived experience of writing poetry to uncover the power for African American adolescent girls to name who they really are?" Both used a sample size of eight, and the poets were preadolescent or adolescent. Neither study was within the purview of my research content interests, but they were very helpful as far as process. Each provided me with philosophical insight, methodological direction, and additional references, the same as did the phenomenological studies in nursing mentioned earlier. It was because of the methodology that I could use all these studies as templates of sorts, yet the latter two in poetry may not have been *true* phenomenology. Regardless of the level of professional research, phenomenology concerns itself with the exploration of meaning of a phenomenon or event, and not just any meaning, but "primal, prereflective, prepredicative"; whereas, other categories of meaning such as psychological, ethnographic, or narrative can negate the phenomenological focus, leading to a faux

phenomenological study (van Manen, "But Is It Phenomenology?" 778). In other words, just because a study self-identifies as phenomenology does not make it so. Although it would be an interesting debate, I would make the call that the dissertation by Bacon, though sprinkled throughout with primary theorists' quotes and definitions and using phenomenological methods, was not a phenomenological dissertation, but a mixture of ethnographic, psychological, and sociological observations, with an ABR overlay. The research question *sounds* like phenomenology, but the research data and written outcome were not in the phenomenological camp.

Champa's dissertation was much more in line with phenomenological research, making creativity the studied phenomenon. It was very complete in its execution; however, there seems to be an implied problem to be solved, which is not the realm of phenomenology. "Phenomenology does not problem solve" (van Manen, RLE 23). There was something about the author's research question itself that allowed it to seek a solution; whereas, phenomenology seeks meaning (van Manen, RLE 23). Nevertheless, both dissertations were helpful in clarifying many aspects of phenomenological research, which was a very difficult to grasp, particularly in its subtleties. And as for format, they both served well as mentor texts.

I finally did find a dissertation from 1977, which I thought might be the Holy Grail of my search: *The Words That Love Made—A Poetic Phenomenology of the Poet's Experience of Being a Poet* (Spezzano). Unfortunately, this work like the others, could only offer greater insight, albeit masterful. The research was anchored in psychology, and the researched poets' *lived* experiences were extrapolated from poems and biographies as all had passed on long before Spezzano began his doctoral study. Of course, my

phenomenon was not the experience of *being* a poet, it was a poet's *lived* experience of the *SAS* as a *phenomenon*.

Aside from those mentioned above seeking to find the meaning of a lived experience that was in some way connected to poets, all other related literature fell into two camps, either the work of specific poets (Rilke, Stevens, O'Hara) and how it was linked to phenomenology and philosophical thinking or poetry in general and its association with philosophy and phenomenology, through aesthetics, thinking, critique, and/or *Being*. The former group, found in articles by Clark, Gosetti-Ferencei, and Page (see Table 1), offered academic and poetic insights, but little that could inform my practical research involving collecting data from participants in real time, live interviews as these other studies scoured the poems of late poets for clues into their lived experience of *being* poets. The second group, found in articles by Davenport, Nuzzo, and Rojcewicz, were dense with information showing an in-depth relationship among poetry and philosophy (general) and phenomenology. Rojcewicz was a bit of an outlier as he uses a living poet's work to illustrate Heidegger's point of "mutual nourishment of philosophy and poetry" and to promote the reverence for the art of poetry itself (33).

For clarity, I give brief listing of findings on Table 1, but to extend the list any further would be repetitive. The amount shown could be multiplied by a factor of ten (there are plenty of articles), but the results would not change as far as their application to my research.

In conclusion, there was a large gap in the literature that would be bridged through the results of my study. My research is original and would provide new

information not only to advance the scholarly dialogue in this area, but create a place for it.

Table 1

Studies in Phenomenology and Poetry

Author/Date	Title	Topic	Format
Bacon/2009	*Culturally Responsive Poetry: The Lived Experience of African American adolescent Girl Poets*	Phenomenological study of lived experience of writing poetry for self-empowerment.	Dissertation
Champa/2016	*Awakening: The Lived Experience of Creativity as Told by Eight Young Creators*	Phenomenological study of Ekphrastic Poetry Contest winners lived experience with creativity.	Dissertation
Clark/1997	"Wallace Stevens: A Portrait of the Artist as a Phenomenologist"	Philosophical analysis of Steven's poetry as phenomenological.	Journal Article in *Philosophy in the Contemporary World*
Davenport/1985	"Poetry, Truth and Phenomenology"	Poetic perspective and the phenomenology of Being.	Journal Article in *Southwest Philosophy Review*
Gosetti-Ferencei/2010	"Immanent Transcendence in Rilke and Stevens"	Transcendence through poetics in the phenomenological tradition	Journal Article in *The German Quarterly*
Nuzzo/2015	"What Are Poets For?": Renewing the question with Hegel and Heidegger	Phenomenological analysis of poetic thinking in relation to philosophical thinking.	Journal Article in *Philosophy Today*
Page/2018	"When Poetry and Phenomenology Collide"	Analysis of poetic thinking in relation to phenomenology through Frank O'Hara's poems.	Journal Article in *Journal of Aesthetics and Phenomenology*
Rojcewicz/2021	"Out of the Experience of Poetry"	Analysis of poetry and philosophy through phenomenological aesthetics.	Journal Article in *Journal of Aesthetics and Phenomenology*
Spezzano/1977	*The Words that Love Made—A Poetic Phenomenology of the Poet's Experience of Being a Poet*	Phenomenological analysis of meaning through the lived experience of six poets a derived from their biographies and poetry.	Dissertation

STATEMENT OF QUESTION

In a way, the poet is a poem to be studied, and studied by gathering and analyzing the response data to the question, "What is the essential meaning and understanding that poets selected as participants give to the *lived* experience of the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* project?" Conceptually, it leaps to Lacan, "A certificate tells me that I was born. I repudiate this certificate: I am not a poet, but a poem. A poem that is being written, even if it looks like a subject" (viii).

THE ANTI-SEMITIC QUESTION

A final note on Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*, anti-Semitism, and fascist affinities: Any serious debate regarding Heidegger's anti-Semitic stance and its influence on his philosophy could not be addressed productively without a level of deep scholarship in the discipline of philosophy. It is far too complex to simply give a "thumbs up or thumbs down" on the functional use of Heidegger's phenomenology as methodology.

The scales have tipped in respose from the weight of two separate sides—"those who exonerate and those who condemn" (Mitchell and Trawny xx). Regarding the former, the arguments ran quantitiatve in that very little of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* expressed his anti-Semitic view, along with the directive to separate the philosopher from the man (Mitchell and Trawny xxi). The flaw of the exoneration was sequential. Consider these questions: What amount of a prejudice is acceptable? And what in the man escapes his philosophy? My answer was that no amount is acceptable, but the reality was that it exists. And how could it not have an influence on Heidegger's philosophical thought, even when not overtly stated, since his thought comes from him, his being?

According to Mitchell and Trawny, choosing either to exonorate or condemn was "comfortable" in that either was an "unambiguous and self-assured" position (xxiv); the real work was to stay vigilant and continue in "thinking and reading, interpreting and responding" (xxv). Therefore, I remained alert, as a researcher's role requires, for anything amiss as I continued on with my phenomenological research in this study.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This chapter covers my basic research design; rational for both qualitative research and phenomenological methodology; the researcher's role; sample strategies from selection qualifiers and sample size to recruitment and protection of participants; data management strategies including data organizing—coding, categorizing, excerpting, and organization; data analysis and interpretation; and data synthesis and summary; issues of trustworthiness; limitations and delimitations; bias control; and ethical considerations.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to explore the meaning of a particular public art project given by poets who participated in that project. The central question guiding the research was "What is the essential meaning and understanding of the *lived* experience given by poets who participated in the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* project and its creation?"

The specific methodology used for management of data (collection, organization, analysis, and synthesis) was interpretive/hermeneutic phenomenology. An ongoing literature review continued throughout the duration of the study to inform by process of the hermeneutic circle, and to keep aligned with the phenomenological methodology of allowing procedures to remain flexible and subject to revision as more information is obtained.

Instrumentation for data collection included a combination of demographic information, in-depth/semi-structured interviews (audio recordings, video recordings),

field notes, journaling, memoing, on-site observations, and narrative essays derived from the interview transcripts. Procedures for analysis followed phenomenological methods such as reviewing data for similarities and differences (reoccurring words/language themes and outliers to those apparent norms) and using the back-and-forth processing of the hermeneutic circle. The procedures are covered in more detail later in this chapter; however, it is important to note that in qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument.

RATIONALE FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The goal of my research breaks into three parts: The first was to elicit thick description through individual interviews, then interpret the language data to achieve an understanding of the meaning given to a phenomenon by the poet-subjects, which in turn expanded the knowledge base of the life-world in an area that has been mostly unexplored. Since the focus was on the subjects' experience from their perspective, this study did not lend itself to quantitative research in that it was not based on a cause/effect hypothesis, nor did it require numerical procedures, manipulations of variables, holding of controls, experimental conditions such as in a research laboratory setting, nor the kind of objectivity as required by empirical science; in fact, an almost opposite procedure was needed to obtain the necessary data for analysis/synthesis in reaching a qualitative research goal. The approach was naturalistic, with an emphasis on communication, description, interaction, interpretation, and understanding to capture context. Since data was often gathered from the perspective of the participant by a researcher within an interactive relationship, there was a subjective element to the process and content.

In sum, qualitative research is used when a particular type of exploration is needed, such as the study of a particular group/population where measurable data is not producible or when their voiced experience has not been accessed, or has even been silenced (Cohen, Kahn and Steeves 1-12; Creswell and Poth 44-46). It is also used when the research conducted does not fit into the paradigm of the scientific method, but rather a method in which context is paramount, as when detailed understanding is presented in a largely literary, flexible (even artistic) manner, unencumbered by past study results (Creswell and Poth 44-46).

For all the above reasons, a qualitative approach was the only methodological choice for the *SAS* study, given the goals of my research. The process began by interviewing subjects, in depth, about their lived experience regarding a specific phenomenon (*SAS*), then analyzing and synthesizing the information, leading to an result which provided understanding or meaning of the essence of said phenomenon, a phenomenon in which the subjects themselves had a hand in creating.

RATIONALE FOR PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

There are several approaches and many subcategories that fall under qualitative research, each with differences in their focus, their process, and the type of data sought; therefore, which approach to employ was determined by my research goal. Since my research wished to get at the heart of a specific phenomenon as experienced by those most able to give voice to the "showing of itself" by that phenomenon, phenomenology was not only the best choice, but the only choice. Even though other methodologies have some overlap (this was discussed in earlier chapters), their aim was not the same and most likely, there was a conscious or unconscious desire to generalized findings, such

was with case studies, ethnographies, and narrative inquiries, which is not a phenomenological goal (Polkinghorne 42; van Manen, RLE 20). Phenomenology also has its sight on the object or event—the phenomenon—not the person as in anthropological, psychological, or sociological studies. The person is the vehicle in phenomenological studies; the results of a phenomenological study, when successful, would be expected to produce "illuminating, meaningful, and/or thoughtful insights and understandings" (van Manen, "But Is It Phenomenology?" 776).

There are subtleties in phenomenology that make it easy to confuse it with other forms of qualitative research. For example, according to van Manen,[41] a study of a "human experience" does not make it phenomenology; there are many purposes to studying an experience, but "phenomenology is the study of the primal, lived, prereflective, prepredicative meaning of an experience" ("But Is It Phenomenology?" 776). In the same article, van Manen explains the difference between phenomenology and psychology in that the latter may study "sense-making" of an individual's personal experience, which is not the same as finding "meaning" that is not a construction, but rather phenomenology offers "ordinary understandings and insights into the phenomenality of human experiences" (778-779). No wonder the confusion. Even the foremost scholars seem to be somewhat "begging the question" in their own explanations. However, van Manen deems it possible to make phenomenology "accessible and do-able by researchers who are not themselves professional philosophers,

[41] van Manen is a Canadian scholar specializing in and famous for his work in phenomenological research methods and pedagogy.

or who do not possess an extensive and in-depth background in the relevant phenomenological philosophical literature" (*Phenomenology of Practice* 18).

As noted earlier, phenomenology is both a philosophy and a methodology, the former informing the latter. It breaks into two major camps, also noted in prior chapters and in the "Terminology" section: Transcendental/descriptive phenomenology and hermeneutic/interpretive phenomenology.[42] To review, phenomenology is concerned with understanding phenomena through lived experience. In its descriptive/transcendental form, "it seeks to describe the essence of experience in its purest form," and in its interpretive/hermeneutic form, "it seeks to reveal the meaning of experience informed by the context in which the experience occurs" (Dibley, Dickerson and Duffy 46). Although both forms seek to find the essence of meaning in the object/event by process of description leading to illumination, each are driven by different beliefs in how understanding is comprehended. With Husserl, emphasis is on the lived experience of "the things themselves" by his process of "bracketing," whereby prior knowledge, presuppositions, and/or biases are set aside to insure a purely objective study of the subjective experiences' essential structures (Dibley, Dickerson and Duffy 7-9; van Manen, RLE 45, 47). The resulting description conveys a deeper understanding of the lifeworld, expanding the knowledge base. Yet, with Heidegger, nothing is off the table as far as context, background, history, knowledge, and involvement when researching a lived experience of a phenomenon *in* the world, as we are "being-in-the-world" (Heidegger's term: *Dasein*) of meaningful existence (Dibley, Dickerson and Duffy 16).

[42] For the purposes of this study, transcendental and descriptive will be used interchangeably or as a combined term for Husserl's phenomenological perspective; hermeneutic and interpretive will be used interchangeably (even though there is a difference) or as a combined term for Heidegger's phenomenological perspective.

Hermeneutic phenomenology attributes meaning through interpretation of the description(s), and an understanding is reached by way of the hermeneutic circle (a process of understanding). Interpretive phenomenological inquiry considers descriptive phenomenological inquiry incomplete for it does not include "an interpretation of significance" (Frechette, Bitzas and Aubry 3).

Since I did not feel I could successfully bracket my background, especially given my extensive research on and participation in *SAS* and anything connected to it over the past decade, I opted for Heidegger's version. Furthermore, though I felt I could not bracket, I also felt I did not *want* to bracket; I could bring so much more to the research if I did not omit my background experience but admitted it into the study as part of its context. Heidegger also adds, as noted above, the interpretive aspect to his approach to inquiry of meaning and of being; to me, interpretive engagement is the whole point of the analysis and synthesis of data.

And, on a practical level, how would I enforce such bracketing on the participants? Finally, the idea of the hermeneutic circle, the negotiation of information from whole to parts and back again and again, is something I do all the time in my own life. It is my reality, and therefore, a process I could use with authenticity and integrity in my research. It would enable me to link the participants' lived experience with my own lived experience of the *SAS* phenomenon through the process of interpretation and revision, which is essentially the definition of the hermeneutic circle (Peoples 34).

RESEARCHER'S ROLE

Information concerning hermeneutics, also called interpretive phenomenology, takes that same data as would be obtained by descriptive/transcendental phenomenology,

but does not bracket out any prior influences, and instead uses those experiences to locate themselves (the researcher) within the study, culturally and historically, and then goes beyond description to give an interpretation of meaning to the lived experience to gain essential understanding. The narrative summary derived from the researcher's interpretation of the qualitative data and the qualitative data support the researcher's exposition.

Role can also be found in the "Researcher" section of Chapter 1. There are several areas to discuss regarding the researcher's role: Participant/observer status, professional and personal connections, positions of power concerning participants, and researcher bias—all culminating in the researcher's stance, situatedness, and the hermeneutic circle, which is used in bridging horizons.

My study explored a particular phenomenon in the context of a particular place at a particular time. It would not be a stretch to pronounce that this study had a determined bent from the start due to my situatedness—a state where the researcher is connected or situated within the world they wish to study, to the point of "being directed towards" the research interest. I was involved in community's cultural programs in that area long before *SAS* existed, honing my skills in both the visual and language arts by any means I knew, and I also lived in close proximity of the project's location, again, long before *SAS* was even an idea in someone's mind. With each passing year, I was "being directed toward" my research interest in some way or another, even if some of the paths I took seemed spurious.

I began only as an observer,[43] but I eventually became a participant in the strictest sense. I had been involved for years submitting to the *SAS* annual calls, studying the winning poems, and attending the yearly events when the panels were scheduled for unveiling. In 2018, I was finally chosen to have my poem displayed in the *SAS* outdoor gallery on Glenrosa. My role as a researcher substantially changed as I gained firsthand access to the processes *after* selection, including working with all the selected poets and artists of that year until the final panels were produced, and then attending the unveiling as a feature rather than part of the audience. I now had experience as both observer and participant, which gave me insight into the lived experience in a way that I did not have before, and the ability for deeper communication with other participants during the interview process, and again later, when applying the hermeneutic circle procedures toward understanding and reaching a fusion of horizons through reflection and other hermeneutic methods, including the use of all six senses, to access being-in-the-world along with my own horizon of significance.

There were total of twenty-five poet-participants throughout the *SAS* years, including myself, and I have met the other twenty-four. As far as personal and professional relationships, about half attended the same ASU/MFA program that I did, either before, after, or during my time in attendance, and I was in the same classes and workshops with a fourth of them. I consider them peers. I have taken classes with three as instructors, and worked with three others on publications and/or readings. I did not detect any power issues during the interview process, even if a poet had been my teacher

[43] I would never consider myself an impartial observer as I always had an emotional connection to *SAS,* a passion for it, and I was determined to have one of my poems on a panel one day. Fortunately, the form of phenomenology I have chosen for my research allows for and even demands a connection with the object, unlike a more reductive, empirical method.

because in poetry relationships, due to the camaraderie found in outside interactions such as conferences and readings, hierarchies are erased or morph into something other than power. Maybe it is more of a respect for the level of craft a former professor possesses. Two poets were longtime friends, and we keep in contact. Any poets I did not know, I met through *SAS.* I also interviewed approximately half of the participants for a prior paper that I was researching on the same subject, but examined from an different perspective.

As far as biases from either a researcher's or participant's stance, they were explored as observations, thoughts, or emotions, often reflexive, and recorded into a journal for further contemplation and possible application by way of hermeneutic analysis. To reiterate, hermeneutic analysis involves considering, reflecting on, and shifting information as a process with its back-and-forth movement from part to whole, from whole to part.

Again, as stated earlier, familiarity and prior knowledge of the phenomenon/ subjects were not considered a negative in interpretive phenomenology, but an aspect that informs and adds to the depth of discovery; this situatedness was used as a starting point and a guide throughout the study to obtain a deeper analysis/synthesis at the finish.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION STRATEGIES, SAMPLE, AND SIZE

The participant selection strategies included sample selection, size, recruitment, and human subject protection. There are two types of selection strategies that were found in use with phenomenology: Purposeful sampling and criterion sampling. The former is considered essential in that participants were specifically selected due to their connection with the phenomenon to be studied; in other words, their experience enabled them to

"purposefully inform" the research (Creswell and Poth 158). The latter—criterion sampling—is a very close relative of purposeful sampling, and in relation to phenomenological study, means that the participants have experienced the phenomenon being studied (Creswell and Poth 157).

Sample Selection. Participants in this study were a convenience sample of poets who were selected for and participated in the *SAS* project and were known personally to the researcher. Participants were adult professionals in the field, over the age of 18, and able to give consent. The sample subjects fulfilled both phenomenology selection strategies stated above.

The inclusion criteria for this study were participants who had a poem selected and displayed at the *SAS* outdoor gallery by the City of Phoenix Arts and Culture between 2008 and 2018. Since the main concern was that the poet-subjects experienced the phenomenon under study, the inclusion criteria ensures that this requirement was met. The sample was not chosen to meet a maximum variation of diversity of populations as diversity was limited by the inclusion criteria which determined the sample.

I divided *SAS* into three phases, Phase I (*Visual Artists Only*), Phase II (*Artists and Poets*), and Phase III (*Poets Only*), then further divided the poets into two groups, Wave I were those who submitted when the city held open-themed competitions, and Wave II were those who submitted when a theme (environmental/ecological/ sustainability) was designated by the city. To clarify further, the very first phase consisted of only artists, no poets, and lasted for three years from the inception of the Seventh Avenue billboards. They were not part of my study.

Sample Size. The population parameter (*N*), which was everyone who met the inclusion criteria, totaled twenty[44]; the sample (*n*) equaled ten poet-participants. Sample sizes for qualitative research are frequently smaller than quantitative; case studies can be a sample of 1, and interpretive phenomenology average around $n = 10$. The smaller samples are the norm due to the intensity of the data collection and the depth of the data itself; the descriptions are elicited through the main means of data collection—the in-depth interview. The research does not require a large sample since the goal is not generalization, but an understanding into the phenomena of everyday lives. Depth not breadth (Roberts and Hyatt 147-148).

Recruitment. I had been following *SAS* since its inception and completed a prior research paper on the subject; therefore, I had all the names and most of the contact information of the potential participants for the study. If I could not contact a poet, I knew poets who could help make that happen. A minimal degree of separation from the participants was an advantage of situatedness, a phenomenological concept defined above.

I used text, email, mail, and telephone to contact potential participants. All were contacted electronically. Each poet received an email containing information about the study, followed by a consent form.

Accessibility was not be a problem, whether due to geographic location or uncertainty due to the pandemic as all contact was made electronically (phone, text, email, Zoom). Access to technology is usually listed as a qualifier for a study of this kind,

[44] Twenty-five poets were solicited by the city over a ten-year period, from 2007-2017, with new installations beginning in 2008 and ending in 2018, but five poets were excluded as potential participants as they did not fit the criteria; two involved classroom collaboration with eighth graders, two were commissioned to write poems *after* they were chosen, and I also excluded myself from the interview process.

but was not a concern with this population as all were technologically capable and had the necessary equipment for contact; in fact, in recent years, the *SAS* call for submissions and subsequent interactions for publication required technology; it was all done online.

Protection of Human Subjects/IRB Approval. The study began after I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Arizona State University. Ten subjects were selected for this study, all over 18, cognitively able to consent to participate, and who may terminate participation at any time. No risks were anticipated for the participants. All participation was voluntary.

Confidentiality was maintained as far as possible, but the project itself was public. The artists' and poets' names were known linked to the project, and presently exist on the City of Phoenix Arts and Culture website, so anonymity may be compromised. It might also be possible to attribute certain study responses to a particular participant if someone wished to do so. Participants were made aware of the public nature of a public art study. Pseudonyms for participants were assigned symbolic markers as names, such as P1 or P9 (P=Poet); however, the names of the poets had already appeared on the physical panels in the public sphere for at least one year in every case. Finally, all materials, records, and recordings were kept in a locked office that I maintain, and to which no one else has access.

Participants received no compensation, but were given a small token of appreciation at the conclusion of the study in the form of a gift certificate, valid for use at a local bookstore with online availability. Hopefully, the participants enjoyed the process, gained some personal insight into themselves and the project (phenomenon) that they

helped to create, along with the aid they gave me in expanding the existing knowledge base of my research.

DATA MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Data management strategies include methods for data collection and methods for data analysis. Methods of data collection included in-depth/semi-structured interviews held through Zoom online, audio recordings and video recordings of the interviews, transcriptions of the interviews, narrative essays derived from the interview transcripts, on-site observations, field notes, journaling, memoing, and autoethnographic techniques. Collected data was coded, organized, and themed. Methods of data analysis and synthesis were completed according to procedural descriptions of the phenomenological process.

Methods for Data Collection. Below were the means by which data was collected from the participants by the researcher, along with parallel processes of recording and reflexivity. Initial contact was by telephone and/or email, after which potential participants received an email explaining the *SAS* project, followed by an informed consent form.

Interviews/Interview Questions

Interviews were 1) in-depth to gather rich, thick description of the *lived* experience of the phenomenon under study, and 2) semi-structured to ensure the interview stayed on track in seeking information relevant to the study's purpose (to find the *meaning* given to the lived experience of a phenomenon), and included 3) open-ended questions as to allow for a narrative response which may add important, unexpected elements. Probing was used for clarity, expansion, and recall, but not for directing the

interview or to lead the interviewee. The interview questions were constructed to align with proper phenomenological inquiry.

Interview questions are found in appendix D. The interview structure followed a reverse of the "tree and branch" model, a model which begins with the main question then branches out into other areas of meaningful events that are aligned with the topic phenomenon (Rubin and Rubin 145). Mine started with an icebreaker, followed by ten questions (branches) sequentially leading up to the main research question (tree) with a probe, if needed. The ten-question sequence was loosely based on the chronological process a poet might be involved in regarding the *SAS*, from submission to selection to set-up of the display; the questions were used to build rapport and stimulate memory, and led to the central research question: What is the essential meaning and understanding that you give to the *lived* experience of the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* project?

Interviews were scheduled to accommodate the interviewee during the months of December 2022 and January 2023. They ran approximately 90-120 minutes, and took place online, using Zoom technology; it was recorded and transcribed by Zoom. Note: In the hierarchy of phenomenological research instruments, the interview is considered primary . . . after the researcher.

Field Notes/Journaling/Memoing

Field notes, journaling,[45] and memoing are an integral part of phenomenological research; they aid in reflection, reflexivity, and as a counter to bias (in whatever form it

[45] Journaling is specific to interpretive/hermeneutic phenomenology as the researcher is allowed to monitor all former knowledge and experience which they bring to study as part of its context; however, in Husserl's descriptive/transcendental phenomenology, bracketing is used to block out all prior "anything" and the researcher comes to the experiment as if from another world without any knowledge or experience to

may exhibit—assumptions, preferences, and so forth) by making it transparent. Field notes are self-explanatory—notes taken from the field. In this case, metacommentary taken soon after interviewing. Journaling could take the form of journal entry or transcript marginalia. Journaling is a journey which informs the research and is also informed by it. An obvious example would be to jot down the impressions regarding the phenomenon at the beginning of the study, and see how future entries revise those impressions through the "give and take, back and forth" of the hermeneutic circle. A journal is also a place to record bias and measure its influence on data collection, interpretation, analysis, and synthesis. This way biases can be "bridled" and thereby checked or controlled to render a more accurate understanding of the lived experience being described.

According to Bloomberg and Volpe, the researcher needs to keep track of information, but need also keep track of their thinking as it becomes part of the methodology of the study; therefore, the journal becomes a record of the research process. Again, in qualitative research, the researcher is "the main instrument of data collection and data analysis" (30). In sum, I have taken field notes when visiting the *SAS* site long before the exact focus of the dissertation was determined, kept a journal throughout the duration of the research, and memoed as the need arose.

Methods for Data Analysis and Synthesis. Methods for data organization, analysis, and synthesis are described in this section. The process in recursive, rather than linear, as

prejudice their study seeking the pure essence of phenomena; however, they could still use journaling to list what they are bracketing out.

some of the data will be in the collection phase, while earlier data will be being analyzed, and then more data will be collected, and so forth.

Data Organization

Interviews were transcribed simultaneously with the audio/visual recording by Zoom. The completed transcriptions were checked against the recorded interview for accuracy and corrected where necessary.

Coding was also done manually, as was sorting out themes and patterns embedded in the data. No software was used. There were several reasons for this decision, but the most ardent involved the Heideggerian concept of "dwelling in the data." I wanted to live in the data, in its raw form, and decide for myself which patterns emerged from my actually "having been there"—in the context of the interview with the participant, in the isolated reading of the transcription, and in my own lived experience as a participant. "Having been there" also allowed my intuition to come forward during the process, which is another aspect of phenomenological interpretation. In addition, I have decades of experience in marketing research, some of which involved coding the initial data from interviews gathered in the field with subjects' answers written by hand (before computers) by the interviewer. Although that helped me to be comfortable with the process, the failsafe in marketing was that we worked as a team; the dissertation was a standalone endeavor, and sometimes I did not catch an error in the process until long after the interviews were completed and I read the retrieved the data from the transcript.

Data Analysis

In phenomenology, the term data analysis is bordering on a misnomer as the action is more of an explication, "an investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon

while keeping the context of the whole" (Hycner 300). The field itself is resistant to prefabricated, step-by-step processes as the belief is that the phenomenon will develop how the investigation should proceed (van Manen, RLE 29). Though guidelines can sometimes be found, even labeled as step-by-step guides, it is up to the researcher to read, read, and read more, and piece together what will work for their study, with the understanding that there will be changes during the research. The best approach, in my opinion, would be allowing osmosis to take effect by reading as many primary and secondary texts about phenomenology as possible. The procedural steps of analysis that I followed were distilled, with a fair amount of my own modifications, from several authors/researchers from different disciplines, who were informed philosophically and methodologically by phenomenology (Bloomberg and Volpe 198-200; Cohen, Kahn and Steeves 76-82; Creswell and Poth 201-202; Dibley, Dickerson and Duffy 119-125; Giorgi 10-19; Groenewald 49-50; Hycner 280-294; Moustakes 120-154, Peoples 59-64; Roberts and Hyatt 153-154). The steps I formulated were as follows:

1) Read the transcriptions through to acquire an overall sense of the descriptions; make transcription error corrections by comparing the audio version to the written transcript;
2) Sort out and code preliminary "meaning units" (that which reveals something about the phenomenon being studied) and "significant statements" from each transcript;
3) Review the meaning units and create individual narratives from each transcript;
4) Create a table from the coding as a visual and numerical guide for analysis;
5) Using analytic memo writing (influenced by field notes and journal entries),

reflect on the participants, phenomenon, process, coding, and emerging patterns;

6) Analyze the table, organize codes into themes, and create a general narrative from the participant's situated narratives using the "most-many-some" method;
7) Interpret and synthesize the general narrative and analytic memos into a composite report.

Data Synthesis

According to Peoples, there is a necessity to "dwell in the details" of the descriptions gathered from participants during the interview process. In so doing, the everydayness is transcended and the essence is revealed (57). In contrast to transcendental phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology connects the researcher to the data in such a way that the researcher becomes the interpreter or translator of the participants' lived experience of the phenomenon under study (64-65). In transcendental phenomenology, the researcher "brackets" their experience of the phenomenon, which isolates them from all past assumptions, experience, and knowledge, and allows for an attempt at a description of the pure essence of the phenomenon in the final synthesis of the data; hence the alternative term, descriptive phenomenology. In interpretive phenomenology, the researcher does not bracket any prior influences; the researcher uses those prior experiences and places themselves within the study, culturally and historically, then takes that same data from their vantage point, and goes beyond description to interpretation, which gives essential meaning to the lived experience. The synthesis of the researcher's interpretation of the data results in the narrative summary.

MATTERS OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

There is much debate regarding the application of traditional quantitative research evaluative devices onto qualitative research when determining trustworthiness of a study. The most often addressed areas are validity and reliability, borrowing the same terminology found in empirical studies. Others prefer alternate terms, credibility and dependability, respectively, to accommodate the different ways these similar aspects are adopted. Though some researchers opt out of the validity question altogether, transparency is necessary in how and when issues of trustworthiness are examined, and trustworthiness depends on rigor—the quality of work done to exacting standards (Dibley, Dickerson and Duffy 149-150). In this study, I use the alternate terms as I believed they are more aligned with the actual nature of phenomenological research.

Credibility (Validity). Of all the components of trustworthiness, credibility is the backbone as its concern is about how well a study measures what it is supposed to measure; therefore, the study is dependent on the accuracy of its instruments and how they are applied by the researcher. Every component of a good research design is interrelated and integral the study's basic purpose. Specific to phenomenology, descriptions and analysis must accurately represent the experience as told by participants about a phenomenon to which they give meaning at a particular point in time.

There are several checks and balances to ensure credibility, some not suitable for dissertations as they require additional researchers. A few that can be used by a solo researcher included "triangulation" of multiple data sources; for example, a researcher can compare data from interviews, follow-up interviews, focus groups, and narrative essays. The data from these differing instruments should result in corroborating evidence.

Another is “member checking,” whereby the participant reads over the transcription of their initial interview for accuracy in representing their experience. This can even be done further along in the process, and a participant can also be shown analyses, interpretations, and conclusions (Creswell and Poth 260-261; Peoples 69-70). Also, focus groups can add much toward corrections of recalled accounts with its interplay of feedback. I considered several of these options, but none were feasible. I felt that asking the poet-participants to do any more than a single interview would be too time consuming and labor intensive for their schedules (including the three very active retirees), and I might lose their ready enthusiasm toward my in-depth interview request if I asked for too much. It seemed like the one interview, lasting an hour and a half to two hours, was the “Goldilocks” amount of commitment for my sample.

Aside from the data driven strategies mentioned above, it has been noted that “prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field” puts the researcher in situ phenomenologically regarding culture and context; therefore, the participant-observer position allows for enough first-hand knowledge that the researcher would recognize when something was amiss, yet also allow for depth in discovery (Creswell and Poth 262; Peoples 69).

Lastly, it is an imperative part of phenomenological research protocol that the researcher keeps a journal and takes field notes monitoring bias/preference, experiential additions, and reflexivity. This helps to clarify any orientations that may influence analysis and interpretation of data (Creswell and Poth 261-262; Peoples 69-70). The challenges to preexisting knowledge will result in changes to these original positions.

This is the ultimate credibility test: According to Peoples, phenomenological studies should always end with discovery to be credible (70).

Dependability (Reliability). Dependability means that which is measured can be measured by others, with the same results, consistently (Roberts and Hyatt 149). Many of the same strategies used in testing credibility can be used for testing dependability. Interrater reliability and peer review are two additional methods, but they require other researchers, and therefore, do not lend themselves for use in dissertation work (Roberts and Hyatt 154).

Confirmability. Confirmability is the counterpart to objectivity in quantitative research, but qualitative research does not deal in objectivity; instead, confirmability seeks to reveal biases that influence analysis of data. Some of the same strategies used above, such as triangulation and journaling (plus audit trails), are helpful in confirmability, as would be to add the following: detailed descriptions of procedures and processes; critical reflection and reflexivity acknowledging bias; and quoting excerpts to confirm interpretations (Bloomberg and Volpe 204-205; Dibley, Dickerson and Duffy 152-153).

Transferability. Transferability or generalizability does not necessarily mean that the qualitative sample is representative of other than itself, but it can be used by a reviewer in such a way that if enough shared information is found, the results can act as a template onto their own situation. In other words, if the original study collects data providing rich, thick description, there will be enough detail for a reviewer to use their own judgement on whether to transfer findings or not (Bloomberg and Volpe 205-206; Dibley, Dickerson and Duffy 153).

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

The basic difference between limitations and delimitations is control. The former is usually out of the control of the researcher; the latter is composed of researcher-determined boundaries, completely in control of the researcher. In most cases, limitations involve that which affects the results of the study unintentionally, but not necessarily out of the awareness of the researcher; whereas, delimitations, chosen by the researcher, influence or direct the results intentionally (Roberts and Hyatt).

Limitations. Most qualitative studies have smaller size samples, which affects the generalization of results; however, phenomenological research rarely considers generalization as one of its goals (Peoples 103; Roberts and Hyatt 154). My study fits into the smaller-sized sample category, and so I mention it here. It is the rich and thick descriptions, with all the details of context and background, that allows a reviewer to determine the appropriate applicability of the study results, which is, in effect, a form of transferability/generalization.

There was, however, a major concern that is known as "participant reactivity," and it involves situations where the participants know the researcher and the researcher is acting as the interviewer. This was my exact role, my exact situation; I knew most of the participants—I have either attended classes with them and/or worked with them on poetry projects. With some, I still maintain friendships and/or working/professional relationships. This can affect the data collected (Bloomberg and Volpe 225). A counter to this problem is the mitigating effect an experienced interviewer and/or researcher can have during the interview sessions. I have over twenty-five years in marketing research,

including interviewing. This prior experience gave me the skills to neutralize the effects of familiarity.

Another area of concern was researcher bias, which takes the form of assumptions, interests, perceptions, and needs (Bloomberg and Volpe 225). This subjective interference can be reduced through awareness by reflecting on how these aspects might influence or are influencing the study; the work of reflection is often done by way of field notes, journals, and memoing.

Finally, in the data analysis portion of the research process, coding can be affected by hidden agendas, assumptions, and inference due to knowing the interviewee. As stated above, I knew most of the participants, and the best defense against this would be a blind coding, where the names would not appear on the transcripts to be studied; however, that would be useless in that I was personally interviewing the subjects, so I was well aware of who is linked to which transcript; therefore, a counter to this might have been to ask my advisor to review the coding associated with some of the transcripts, though I did not employ this option (Bloomberg and Volpe 225).

Delimitations. The boundaries of this study are as follows:

Time of study—August 2021 through November 2023.

Location of study—Online video, email/text, and telephone contact only.[46]

Sample of study—Poets who had direct experience with *SAS* by having a poem selected and installed onto a panel display at the outdoor

[46] There was never a consideration of in-person meetings because I designed my study during the pandemic, and with that in mind, I ensured everything could be completed electronically.

gallery bus stop located in the Melrose Neighborhood District of midtown Phoenix.

Only those poets who were selected for and participated in the *SAS* project were considered; the pool of participants did not include poets who submitted and were not chosen for the *SAS* project. Four poets who were accepted for the *SAS* project were not considered for this study in that they were either hired as teacher/collaborators working with a classroom of eighth graders to produce themed poems or they were commissioned to write poems for *SAS* and not selected on the strength of a submitted poem, but on their strength of reputation as a poet. These poets did not qualify because their experience would be outside the assumed experience of poets submitting their work for inclusion as independent, singular artists.

BIAS CONTROL

As noted in several sections above, the practice of bracketing was not used in this study; there was no effort to dismiss preconceptions and prejudices of the researcher; instead, they were tracked in notes as part of the research, but these prior assumptions, whether positive, negative, or neutral, were noted as existing in the awareness of the researcher throughout the duration of the study, including the revisions of these biases as descriptions from the poet-participants were absorbed.

Of the two main branches of phenomenology, one attempts to eliminate all prior knowledge and come to the phenomenon or allow the phenomenon to unfold before them in the purest sense of itself, as if the observer is a blank slate being written on for the first time, only not even the slate nor the chalk exists; the other includes all prior experiences as part of how a lived experience is felt, with all the cultural/historical background in

tow, and uses that information while interpreting the data. For this study, I was in the second camp.

ETHICS/ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Regarding ethical considerations, any directives given by the IRB were followed and/or discussed considering the unique aspects of phenomenological research compared to other methods that also fall under the qualitative umbrella. Some of the general concerns have already been addressed in earlier sections. In sum, the IRB determined my research to fall under "exempt" status.

Since such a large percentage of participants knew each other and knew me, contact and recruitment were easy. There could be some hesitation if a participant did not want to participate or wanted to leave the study early, but felt uncomfortable to refuse or leave, respectively, due to false loyalty or a connection with other participants, even though it was unknown to them who was participating. Therefore, it was made clear that participation was voluntary and duration was in the hands of the participant. They could quit the study at any time.

Anonymity and confidentiality were problematic from the start. Anonymity was impossible due to the publicness of public art; every poet's name can still be found on the City of Phoenix website. And for a year, at minimum, each had placement of their signed poem on display in central Phoenix. There were also a few newspaper accounts, including brief interviews with the poets.

Confidentiality was doable, but even a small detail could give away a participant's identity. For instance, the first poetry reading, which began as an attendant event to the *Streetscape* with Series 4, met with a cold rain; the reading was postponed

that very night in real time (I was present). If this was mentioned by a participant as part of their lived experience, that would narrow the respondents down to three poets in whatever was contained or used from that interview. However, as it turned out, none of those three poets were interviewed, nor mentioned.

Data storage was not an issue. I have a locked office where all data, electronic or otherwise, were kept. I was the only one who has access to the office, and I allowed no one inside (partially due to the pandemic existing at the time of this research, but also to ensure the safety of data). Destruction of data will be decided at the end of the study. Protection of both researcher and respondents does not appear to be an issue in this study in that we all know each other—personally, professionally, and at least peripherally. Most of us are connected to an academic institution, and in the interest of boundaries, I suggested that a professional, public email address be used for contact. It was what I used. My ASU Zoom account for recording interviews.

At the time I began my research, I was not aware of any conflicts of interest, nor anticipated such, then one of the potential participants was very recently hired (January 2022) by the City of Phoenix Arts and Culture as the new Project Manager. They would be the person in charge of the *SAS*. That was something I had to consider during the recruitment phase; however, before I began recruitment, they had left the position only after six months being, and entered an out-of-state MFA program.

I did successfully recruit this poet for my study, and I had interviewed him before concerning *SAS*, but in a different context. I have also worked for this person as an editor, though there was no apparent power differential. Power differentials also did not exist regarding two participants who were my former professors, but they had retired and no

longer held that function. I have worked with a few of the poets, though as equals or peers. I have developed personal friendships with some, but the communication was such that we would be able to discuss openly any interfering issues regarding the research, and thereby, find a remedy.

No incentives were given; still, it is pro forma to receive some minimal token of appreciation as a participant. In my own experience, I have been given gift certificates to Starbuck's and credit on my Amazon account, all with a value of five to ten dollars. I gave gift certificates to the Changing Hands Bookstore (my guess is that every poet-participant had gone there at least once, and I have attended some of their readings at the bookstore); it is independently-owned, local, and honors online purchases for those poets who now live elsewhere.

Finally, I did not anticipate any adverse effects to anyone participating in this study, nor did the IRB as they gave me an exempt status on moving forward with my primary research. Judging by the end comments, the poet-participants found the interview enjoyable and enlightening. Some revealed that they did not realize how important *SAS* was to them until participating in the interview.

Poets are made for phenomenology. This is echoed in van Manen's wonderful translation of van den Berg: "[Phenomena] have something to say to us—this is common knowledge among poets and painters. Therefore, poets and painters are born phenomenologists . . . poets and painters . . . understand very well their task of sharing, by means of word and image, their insights with others . . ." (cited in Groenewald 44).

CHAPTER 5

DATA PRESENTATION

This study presents the essential meaning given by ten poets who were selected and participated in the *SAS* public art project. The definition of public art has never been fully agreed upon, and its value to the community has not been established much beyond anecdotal evidence. The makers—artists and poets—unless famous enough to be singled out for a human-interest feature, were usually never contacted for more than a brief comment, if contacted at all, by local news agencies. However, as stated above, this study had as its focus the phenomenon of poetry as public art (*SAS*) and illuminates the lived experience of the poets themselves and the meaning they assign to that experience.

This chapter presents the data collected during the one-on-one interviews of the poet-participants. The original transcriptions underwent various methods of data reduction—selecting, coding, summarizing, clustering—until a final report was rendered. Data reduction or data condensation was a part of analysis (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 11). It removed the unessential to the research question and displays the essence of the resultant data.

The interview questions and the corrected original transcripts of the central research question (the final section of the interview) are found in the Appendices. The full transcripts contain data that did not address the main research question, though the initial questions were included to build rapport and stimulate memory before reaching the final question on which this study pivoted. The information may be used in future research, though the length of entire interviews and questions diverging from the main research, excluded the full transcripts from entry into the Appendices.

STEPS TO DATA REDUCTION

The steps to data reduction consisted of 1) transcribing the recorded interviews, 2) comparing the written transcript with the audio version and correcting for errors, 3) selecting and reprinting *only* the section of the transcript containing information regarding the main research question, 4) coding the response to the main research question using Initial Coding and In Vivo Coding, 5) writing a narrative summary (preceded by a brief bio and the date/time/duration of the recorded interview and final question) using the coding and the content from the corrected original transcript, 6) (re)marking the summary narrative using the same coding method as with the transcripts, 7) tallying the codes onto a table showing individual poet responses, frequency of a response, and a collective total of each response, 8) writing analytic memos—reflecting on and writing about the research, 9) analyzing and interpreting Table 2—first cycle coding, 10) commencing with second cycle coding—searching for patterns, looking for themes, 11) analyzing and interpreting Table 3—second cycle coding, 12) formulating a general narrative.

Transcribing Recorded Interviews. Transcriptions were done automatically and simultaneously during the actual audio/video recording of the interview through Zoom. When the recordings and transcriptions were ready to download, Zoom sent a notification through ASU email. Once notified, I accessed and downloaded both the recording and the transcription, saved both, and printed out the transcription.

Reviewing Transcriptions Against the Recordings. Due to the existing nature of electronic transcription, there were "mishearing" errors, such as mistaking "historical" for "hysterical," or not catching several words in sequence from the recorded answers, so

they were missing from the transcript, and were entered in manually. There was a function that automatically removes “uh” from the recording, so those were missing throughout the written transcripts.

Isolating the Main Research Question. After printing out the full transcript, a second electronic copy was made, saved, and all questions/answers were deleted but the central research question: What is the essential meaning and understanding that you give to the lived experience of the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* project? This new version was saved and printed out.

First Cycle Coding: Coding Central Research Question Responses. I coded the Central Question Transcript (CQT) for each of the ten poets using two forms of Elemental methods coding, Initial Coding and In Vivo Coding. Elemental methods refer to the basic or primary nature of this type of qualitative analysis, which uses description of “content” or “conceptual” data as a foundation for further coding (Saldaña 83). Initial Coding, also called “Open Coding,” is an open-ended process, and as its name suggests, is employed effectively at the start of analyzing data, especially when applied line-by-line to interview transcripts (Charmaz 125), which was exactly how I proceeded with my data. Initial Coding is the beginning of pulling out key words from the transcripts, all of which is provisional and subject to change as further data is explored (Charmaz 117). In Vivo Coding is a subset of Initial Coding and entails the practice of retrieving the information as an exact quote from the data (Saldaña 91).

At that point, I also created as cluster diagram with all the major terms or “codes” pulled from the data, and then I noted the poet-participant “number” next to the term if the poet had expressed it, even in an associated word form, during their interview. The

number given to each poet functioned as a pseudonym. It was assigned chronologically according to when the poet was selected along the timeline of the *SAS* project; the earlier in the life of *SAS*, the lower the number. Numbers were assigned to the original transcripts, prior to any corrections or reductions.

Writing the Narrative Summary. To reduce the data into a more accessible form, I distilled the CQT and coded markings into a narrative. The narrative exhibits as a discussion and followed the same organizational pattern (described below) for each poet-participant. The narratives are found later in this chapter.

Recoding the Narrative Summary. Using the original CQT and the cluster diagram as references, I recoded the narratives in the same way I originally coded the CQT, using Initial and In Vivo Coding procedures and marking (underlining, circling) key terms, phrases, and sentences, using red or green ink for heightened visibility. I also memoed in the margins. Memoing, again, is another qualitative technique where thoughts, feelings, insights, or almost anything can be noted regarding the text or what the text may have inspired.

After coding directly onto the narrative, I retrieved a traditional lined, yellow pad, created headings on separate page for each poet (P1, P2 . . .), and in long hand with a pencil, I listed for each poet-participant, the terms, phrases, quotes, and anecdotes they used for detailing their lived experience of *SAS*. If any item was referenced more than once, it was tick marked for each mention. After all ten poet-participants' narratives were distilled into its own code list, I proceeded to transfer that information onto index cards. Each index had the term/phrase/quote on the front, along with the number of times the term or phrase was stated; the poet-participant's identifying number was placed on the

reverse side of the card. The cards were then organized in stacks according to like terms/concepts, even though each poet may have utilized a different word to convey a similar meaning. Again, in long hand, on a lined yellow pad, I numbered and assigned a stack to each line, and then I filled each line with all the descriptors contained in its assigned stack. When completed, the list had about 30 categories. Each category was simplified into a label of no more than 5 words, and placed on its own index card; the cards were then arranged again in alphabetical order, and placed into a table with labels such as "Aesthetic/Artistic" or "Miracle/Miraculous." In some cases, I was able to combine categories, and the final code count was twenty-five. This number felt about right, and although all studies are unique and should be handled as such (Saldaña 23), the recommended amount for qualitative studies might start with twelve to sixty codes (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 58), with a winnowing down into twenty-five to thirty (Creswell and Poth 190). Again, I felt my number hit the mark.

Tallying Codes onto a Table. I set up a table using twenty-five codes, in alphabetical order, along the vertical y-axis, and poet-participant "pseudonyms" across the horizontal x-axis. Using the initial set of seventy-five index cards containing the code on the front of the card, the number of times the code word was said, and the poet's identification number on the back, I tallied each card by placing a checkmark in the column and row where the poet and the code intersected. The intersected space can hold only three checkmarks, so if a term was mentioned more than three times by a poet, a check plus the number of times minus one (for the initial check) would be the entry; for example, if a term was stated four times, it would be represented by a √+3.

Once all the cards were tallied, I rechecked my work by going through the cards a second time. Finally, I added the codes across each row and placed the totals in the final column in ratio form. The top number is how many times the code word was mentioned; the bottom number is how many poets cited the code word(s). A code could have eight mentions, yet only a single poet observed or experienced that aspect regarding *SAS*.

Analytic Memoing: Reflecting On and Writing About the Research. According to Saldaña, memos are data (45). Memoing is a process of recorded reflection about anything related to the data as loosely as that may be determined. They are not field notes or coding; they are reflections *on* field notes and codes—the use of memoing sorts out, in plain language, what is going on beneath and/or beyond the code word—the code word acting as an evocative trigger. The memo is not limited to notes and codes, but reflects upon any actions, assumptions, attitudes, beliefs, choices, decisions, dilemmas, emotions, experiences, problems, questions, relationships, roles, thoughts, or values related to the study (Saldaña 45-53).

Analyzing and Interpreting Table 2: First Cycle Coding. In the first cycle coding, I separated analysis from interpretation. I started with content analysis, where I examined the data from the individual narrative summaries, systematically tagging words used by the poets to describe the meaning they gave to *SAS* through their lived experience of the project. Words that could be grouped together, were grouped together under a significant descriptor, and thus, they became standardized as codes.

The codes were then placed into a table, as noted above, and calculations were made as to the number of times a term was mentioned, and the number of poets who mentioned the term. A tally was entered in ratio form, number of times over number of

poets. The table was colored coded as to the percentage of poets who mentioned specific codes; regardless of multiple mentions by the same poet, for percentage purposes, the codes were counted only once. The statistical outcome was discussed in the analysis sections, followed by an interpretation of the results. Further details on the analysis and subsequent interpretation are found toward the end of this chapter, situated near Table 2.

Second Cycle Coding: Searching for Patterns, Looking for Themes. I used Pattern Coding as my second cycle method for themeing the data. The twenty-five codes were explored for a pattern, which at first seemed impossible to discern, and then, in what seemed like an instant, five or six themes emerged from the page almost magically. Of course, the so-called magic was more of a function of dwelling in the data for so long, the patterns thematically arranged themselves, even when I was not working with the data directly or consciously, it was working on me. Again, as with the number of codes, I also hit the mark with the number of themes. According to Creswell, five or six themes is something to aim for by reducing and combining the final code list (190). Regardless of the actual number, it is best to keep it minimal in the name of coherence (Saldaña 25).

The themes were then placed into a table, and calculations were made as to the number of poets who aligned with that theme according to their interview transcript. A total was entered for each theme.

Analyzing and Interpreting Table 3: Second Cycle Coding. Using Pattern Coding, I looked at ways to "recode" the data, which were now in the form of codes (descriptive words or phrases) into categories that made sense conceptually (which are now designated as themes), and would also have the effect of reducing the number of codes. Just as in the first cycle coding, I separated analysis from interpretation in the second

cycle coding. I explored my own version of statistical analysis regarding the fluctuations in the numbers as they moved from codes to themes, then interpreted those variations. Further details on the analysis and subsequent interpretation are found toward the end of this chapter, situated near Table 3.

Formulating a General Narrative. A general narrative summary is found in the final chapter, Chapter Six. Chapter Six reviews the study's purpose in relation to the central research question; presents and discusses the themes derived from the data; analyzes and interprets those themes through the lens of interpretive phenomenology; addresses limitations and delimitation; suggests recommendations for further research; and concludes with a few final thoughts.

POET-PARTICIPANT MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION NARRATIVES

The poet-participant narrative section (below) follows the same format for all poets. It was divided into three parts. The first part identified the poet-participant by number (P#), then gave the day, date, and time the interview took place, the length of the entire interview, and the length of the response to the final question, the CRQ.

Next, a brief biography states whether there was an ASU connection, educational information, how I met the poet, work history, publications/awards/fellowships, and where they are now. The biographic information was provided by the poets themselves through professional websites and/or my personal interactions with them throughout the years.

Lastly, a condensed narrative from the interview transcript described the meaning the poet-participants gave to their lived experience of the *SAS*. The full interviews lasted from fifty minutes to over two hours, averaging ninety minutes. The length of the

narrative summaries varied greatly, yet they were in line with the response time given to the CRQ—the more detailed the verbal response, the longer the transcript, and the longer written summary. The responses to the CRQ ranged from a little more than a minute to over twenty minutes, with half lasting eight minutes, give or take a minute.

Again, the length of the narrative summary was directly proportional to the length of the last interview question—the main research question. I circled words, highlighted passages, and isolated material to place into direct quotes as part of the Initial and In Vivo Coding procedure. I put those words together by summary, paraphrase, quotations, and interpretation to create a final summary narrative. Of course, the inherent bias I embody as the researcher was present; although I pulled from the transcript as much as I deemed relevant, consciously or unconsciously, I was selecting what I can see. Some aspects of another poet's experience may be invisible to or minimized by me, and therefore, overlooked or discounted, respectively.

Poet-Participant #1 (P1). The interview with P1 took place on Zoom at noon, on Wednesday, January 4, 2023. The entire interview lasted almost two hours, and the final question took about seven minutes.

Background

P1 has an ASU connection. P1 graduated with an MFA in poetry from ASU; he also received an earlier graduate degree, an MA in Literature/Creative Writing. When I met P1, around 2003 or 2004, he was teaching poetry workshops in Tempe; we met when I took a poetry class from him. He held several assistant director and interim director positions at ASU through their Young Writers programs and the Piper Center, and he also taught Creative Writing for ASU.

P1 has been published in numerous journals, won several awards, including an Arizona Commission on the Arts (ACA) fellowship, and published two books. When I interviewed him for this study, he was just ending his term as an Associate Professor at Drew, a private university in New Jersey.

Narrative Transcript Summary

In answering the central research question, which was asked twice as was my pattern, P1 immediately stated "It's . . . the idea that art exists beyond the universities, beyond . . . the workshops, beyond the classrooms—that it really is a shared and lived, common human experience." He went on to say that the goal of placing art in public spaces was "to be able to get it out there in a different way" . . . where you don't expect it, "where you are reaching different audiences in a different . . . time." P1 then explained private space within public space where "you don't expect to see . . . to engage with art," such as bus stops, subways, even elevators, in the morning or the afternoon, and there it is—the opportunity for introspection—to "focus" on and "interact" with a poem instead of peering into a cell phone. He repeats "introspective" twice.

P1 offered a quote by poet Charles Simic, "Poems are other people's snapshots in which we recognize ourselves."[47] He notes that in these unexpected moments there is "something in which you recognize yourself in someone else's work"; for example, he says in his own *SAS* poem, which speaks of illness and loss, that someone reading it might recall their own stories of being in a similar circumstance, providing a "deepening" of an experience with the poem.

[47] The actual quote is "Poems are other people's snapshots in which we see our own lives."

This recognition of seeing yourself in another's artistic expression is summed up by P1 as simply "a really nice thing," and he believes we need more art in public settings as an impetus to "reconnect" with ourselves and others. P1 feels this way about *SAS* and public art in general because he has had his own similar experience when he has happened upon the unexpectedly-placed *objet d'art*—to be "blindsided" by art that "challenges you to interact." He mentions the "unexpected" aspect of public art poetry, regarding time and place, four more times in that we "don't expect to see . . . don't expect to engage . . . don't expect to read. . . Just those moments when we don't expect it."

I mentioned, perhaps leading, that I would see a public art poem and notice not only content, but craft—line breaks, imagery, word choice—and P1 agreed, "That too," and how "looking at my poem so large . . . all of those technical things . . . what a nightmare . . . if [something] didn't belong." And "at that scale . . . you see it right away."

When asked how he came to his understanding of his own lived experience, P1 said these realizations were from a lifetime of past and ongoing participation in public art, art in general, writing, and poetry.

Poet-Participant #2 (P2). The interview with P2 took place on Zoom at 8:30 am, on Tuesday, January 10, 2023. It lasted a little over ninety minutes, and the final question took about seven minutes.

Background

P2 graduated with an MA from Northern Arizona University (NAU) and an MFA from the University of Montana. Although P2 lived in Arizona and we were both part of the local poetry scene, we did not cross paths until he won an Artist Fellowship from the Arizona Commission on the Arts (and another from the Nebraska Arts Council); I was

introduced to his poetry through the former venue and contacted him about his work. P2 is the author of four volumes of poetry, and he is an Associate Professor with the Writer's Workshop at the University of Nebraska.

Narrative Transcript Summary

According to P2, the *SAS* project was a "fantastic forum" for very different populations, both artists and audience, and for showcasing—showcasing the artist, the poet, and the artist and poet pairings. For P2, the particular way one stumbles upon the poem—on a bus stop billboard—is exciting. P2 explained that in his experience, even MFA creative writing students often consider only publications like the *New Yorker* when asked where poetry can be found. He especially was impressed that the idea of the *SAS* came from the city itself in that he believes it takes "civic leadership and vision," something not found in all cities regarding public art. He emphasized the word "civic" and the word "exciting."

Poet-Participant #3 (P3). The interview with P3 took place on Zoom at 9 am, on Tuesday, January 3, 2023. It lasted close to ninety minutes, and the final question was a about eighteen minutes.

Background

P3 has an ASU connection. P3 graduated with a MFA and a MLS (liberal studies), both from ASU. She taught as a Faculty Associate and a Teaching Assistant, both through the English Department at ASU. I was introduced to P3 by P1 when he recommended me to her as a potential featured reader for a local, but esteemed poetry series that she ran every April (I did get the spot). As is usual with poets, we knew all the

same people, though we had never met. We also had art in common; P3 is a visual artist as well as a writer, though her awards, shows, and publications number too many to list here. She is currently retired.

Narrative Transcript Summary

P3 had prefaced her initial statement by saying she wanted to describe her experience of *SAS*, of that built environment[48] in a clever way; she summed it up saying, "I don't know that I think it ever gets any better." P3 elaborated on how the project gets everyone involved, together: the artist, the writer, the fabricators, the community. She sees the "rawness" in it by taking the project at the level of the street—"a noisy, noisy bus stop . . . where they're real people, and they're actually riding buses." It is "real" and doesn't "apologize for itself," nor "water[s] itself down."

P3 was referring to the history of *SAS* as she has a long association with the project—from selection panelist to selected poet. She discusses how, in the beginning, there we just "real poems." She said that "was really nice . . . as good and pure as it gets." Then she gave details about the voting; it was a roomful of people choosing the art and poetry to which they responded best. It was "honest." There was no "fix," no special privilege for politicians or professors. It felt real and honest to P3.

It was a community effort. People from the community put it together; then people from the community came together to look at and talk about art at the culmination—a big party honoring the community, the artists, and the poets.; all the poets read their poems. "I thought it was splendid," said P3.

[48] *SAS* was not just a poem on a billboard, but incorporated several components—seating, lighting, shading (canopy). Plus, a multi-activity event at the annual unveiling.

Poet-Participant #4 (P4). The interview with P4 took place on Zoom at 10:30 am, on Monday, January 9, 2023. It lasted about fifty minutes, and the final questions was approximately four minutes.

Background

P4 has an ASU connection. P4 graduated with an MFA in poetry from ASU and we met because we had classes together. He had originally pursued a career in business, randomly began taking classes at ASU to see what was a fit, and found creative writing was his path. He began teaching during graduate school and there found his passion. P4 currently teaches at ASU as an Assistant Teaching Professor.

Narrative Transcript Summary

P4 sees *SAS* as a "fun memory." The year he was selected, the city gave the poets a miniature version of the billboard display. He had his framed, and even attached a backlight like the actual installation. It reminds him of his focus during those years, which has shifted, though he still keeps the little light box plugged in and on as the poem is a reminder that it was out in public and maybe enjoyed. "Somebody might have been waiting at the bus and read it and goes, 'Oh, neat!'"

At the time, P4 says he was "substantially more invested" and hoped that someone would "read it, and remember it, and hold . . . onto it!" Of course, he is "not in that space anymore," but confessed, "It'd be neat if maybe somebody remembered that it existed outside of a school project or a dissertation [Laughs]." The interview took another direction at this point, into P4's perspective on the archival and academic.

Poet-Participant #5 (P5). The interview with P5 took place on Zoom at 11 am, on Tuesday, January 10, 2023. It lasted 90 minutes, and the final question was answered in about two minutes.

Background

P5 has an ASU connection. P5 graduated with an MFA in poetry from ASU a few years after I did; we met in a workshop at the annual Desert Nights, Rising Stars Writing Conference sponsored by the Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing at ASU. I liked her poetry immediately. We discovered that we had mutual friends in both Phoenix and the East Bay, and I interviewed her once before when I was gathering information *SAS* for my dissertation. She has published several books and many poems, and she was awarded several prestigious residencies. Formerly an attorney, she has been with the University of San Francisco for a dozen years as an Adjunct Professor.

Narrative Transcript Summary

P5 thought of *SAS* as a "celebration," and still feels that way. About that "celebratory experience," she says, "I enjoy it and benefit from it . . . It still makes me happy." And she has felt that way always.

P5 was also from a year that the poets received a small-scale model of the *SAS* billboard. She keeps it outside on her fence where delivery personnel who drop off packages or anyone else who comes to the house might read it. She says, ". . . in a way, it's kind of in a public space again."

Poet-Participant #6 (P6). The interview with P6 took place on Zoom at 3 pm, Monday, January 16, 2023, and it lasted for more than two hours. The final question was about eight minutes.

Background

P6 has an ASU connection. P6 was an Associate Professor in ASU's MFA program. She was not only one of my professors, but was also on my MFA committee. I met P6 when I registered for her poetry class in 2003; it was the first creative writing class I took at ASU, though I had taken many other classes at ASU, mostly English and psychology, and I had taken creative writing classes elsewhere. She has several published books of poetry and many poems in journals, though she has recently retired. Her poems are lyrical and meditative, which reflected in her answers to the interview questions. Also reflected is her habit of close reading, almost as if dissecting, which I remember from her poetry classes.

Narrative Transcript Summary

P6 repeated the research question a couple times, repeating one of the key words— "essential"—five times before answering. She then concluded, "It is a gift." P6 explained further that "poems are gifts," then went on to downplay the idea of "gift," not wanting to make a "big deal" of it or be "precious" about it, but that a poem "when it goes out in the world . . . big and out" [the poet uses her hands to motion wide, upward, and outward, while vocalizing a "whooshing" sound] it becomes the "other"—it becomes

philosophical "between the self and the other . . . the other . . . would get this . . . from the universe, knowing there is a writer behind it."

She repeats that she sees it as a gift, and in a very animated way, P6 describes how someone would walk down the street to catch the bus, and then see this huge poem, and say, "Oh, oh . . . WOW! . . . WOW! Thank you, Universe." It is an encounter that she likens to encountering a jasmine flower or a WOW!

P6 believes it is "essential in the sense that it enriches the environment" unlike a stone or a bench. It's "uplifted from the ordinary . . . yet, it's about fitting in with the rest [of the environment] at the same time."

"I'd be really happy if I lived around there: , and . . . and I used mass transit [long pause] It'd make my life better," said P6. She added that she was projecting how it would "enrich" her neighborhood in a "healthy" way because she didn't actually live near *SAS*, so didn't know exactly how it might be; she "imagined it . . . a real gift, a treat," but it was an unfamiliar experience.

P6 then turns in the opposite direction to explain the phenomenon, comparing *SAS* to being so familiar with someone as in a marriage that "you see them every day . . . you relate the same way every day. But once in a while . . . you look at them as they are their very own person in their very own space . . . not having anything to do with you, specifically. But there they are . . . just a miracle in a way that you're not projecting anything onto them. You're seeing them . . . as their own person, very clearly . . . not with any history . . . It's just there, and you go, 'Wow!' It's kind of like that for me."

I suggested it may be like taking something for granted, but then you see it, and it's its own. P6 agreed, stating, "Exactly," but she could not make that experience

happen, she could not "conjure it," though she would like to so as to "be in that mode more often."

At the end of the interview, I asked if P6 had any questions for me or anything to add, which is how I might usually end an interview, but P6 was the only poet-participant that had a question for me. She asked, "Was there anything . . . in your experience with . . . Seventh Avenue . . . that was radically different . . . from mine, like at opposite ends?"

Poet-Participant #7 (P7). The interview with P7 took place on Zoom at 1 pm, on Tuesday, December 27, 2023, and lasted approximately an hour. His answer to the final question was about nine minutes long.

Background

P7 has an ASU connection. P7 graduated with an MFA in poetry from ASU and followed that up with a PhD from Ohio University. I contacted him several years ago, in part because I liked his work, his craft, his subject matter, but I also interviewed him for an earlier incarnation of my dissertation. P7 writes about his experiences as a war veteran and has published no less than three volumes of poetry at this writing. He has won several prestigious awards, including the Stegner Fellowship from Stanford, and currently is an Assistant Professor of English at the United States Air Force Academy.

Narrative Transcript Summary

P7 twice repeated the word "essential" from the research questions and needed to "think a second" before answering as he wished to express in depth. He then stated, "the ethos of being a poet is trying to say something on the page that can connect you with other human beings and create a connection and an empathy, and maybe even an

understanding that makes individuals feel maybe less isolated in a world that is very difficult and challenging and mysterious." He added that is what all poetry should aspire to on whatever level, whether reading in individual poem, or reading a poem from a book, or a journal, but to have a poem placed in a larger format such as the *SAS*, he believes the effect may be tenfold. P7 explains, "It just multiplies when you have a poem like that set up . . . beautifully done, aesthetically pleasing in a public space where people, you know, are just going about their lives, whether it's going to work, the grocery store, taking a walk, so to try to connect with them on that level. Such a large platform. I think it does make the world . . . a more welcoming, more . . . pleasing, more aesthetically pleasing place, and it shows how poetry can connect human beings together in . . . ways that I think prose just can't do because of its length . . ."

P7 came to this understanding through his mentors and teachers; at first, he was "suspicious of poetry or any art" as he didn't realize how powerful it is until he had the experience from reading a poem that was "like no other experience." And he kept reading to have that experience. Now, twenty years later, he's even more convinced of the power of poetry, how it brings people together, how it relates to song, the "miraculous" human voice—this he teaches to his own students.

To explain his lived experience, he recalls the poem "Facing It" by Yusef Komunyakaa, a Vietnam veteran. P7 was an undergraduate at the time and could only access the surface of the poem—a man reckoning with himself on a myriad of levels while standing before a war memorial. P7 has read that poem hundred of times until his own reckoning came about through the complicated network of human feelings. No

longer reading on a superficial level, P7 felt awe, terror, grief, anger, apathy, and sadness through the poem's language, cadence, and images.

P7 believes that there is something triumphant even in poems about the most horrifying experience; for example, the way in which Komunyakaa captures that experience is triumphant for P7 and many others. Specifically, P7 states, "It makes us feel . . . less isolated, and it makes us feel like there's an understanding out there that can be communicated and transferred through the written word on the page in a poem that's only, you know, 20 or 30 lines or so, and I think that is miraculous, and I keep reading poetry because I hunger for those experiences, and as you know, most poetry is not going to do that for you, but you will encounter poems that will . . . but you have to keep reading to find those experiences."

Poet-Participant #8 (P8). The interview with P took place on Zoom at 10 am, on Friday, January 13, 2023. The interview lasted about fifty minutes, and the final question almost eight minutes.

Background

P8 has an ASU connection. P8 graduated with a BA in Journalism and Mass Communications from ASU's Walter Cronkite School. She was the only poet that I did not know before meeting her at the *SAS* poetry reading event for the selected poets; we were both chosen the same year. P8 is a wife, mother, and currently works from home as a freelance writer, editor, and journalist.

Narrative Transcript Summary

P8 repeated the research questions, stated it was a “good question,” and then explained her lived experience by choosing a brief narrative of a secondary experience she had with a stranger on Instagram as a consequence of *SAS*. A person she did not know direct messaged her, tagged her, and posted her poem panel; they had a few exchanges regarding the poem as the poster liked the poem. P8 found the communication “affirming” in that it demonstrated how poetry “transcend” the limits of our everyday connections and “connect people who have no connection” into meaningful conversation. On the personal level, as a writer, she believes it “that there's value in these words, that it means something, that there's some reason I'm doing this.” To P8, it was a concrete affirmation of its value “that allowed strangers to find it, see it, and . . . find me”; she had never experienced this before or since.

I probed “meaningful,” asking, “What does that mean?” P8 shared that the girl she spoke of rode her bike by the billboards on her way to work or school on a regular basis, “and so, instead of . . . a billboard for an ad . . . it's a beautiful piece of art with words on it, that's . . . better than an ad . . . she took the time to stop and read it, see my name, find me on Instagram—We had a conversation.” P8 said that was more meaningful than “it being an ad, to it being pretty, to it being like a poem and a thing by someone she kind of knows now that we have a connection, that we've had a conversation. I think that's what I mean.” She adds that it . . . “deepens the connection—each layer . . . when like cities do projects that are beautifying . . . even that . . . makes life better . . . allowing people to connect with . . . other people [who] live in . . . the same general area can be . . . even more special.”

Poet-Participant #9 (P9). The interview with P9 took place on Zoom at 1pm, on Friday, January 30, 2023. The interview was close to two and a half hours, and the final question came in at over twenty minutes, the longest answer given.

Background

P9 has an ASU connection. P9 graduated with a BA in both English and Philosophy from McDaniel College. Shortly after he arrived in Phoenix, P9 moved and shook the local literary scene, and that is how we met—through poetry readings and events about a decade ago. In that decade, he founded and directed an independent journal and small press; ran free regularly scheduled writing workshops in central Phoenix (which I attended); and developed, hosted, and promoted cultural events (P9 self-identifies as writer, editor, and culture worker). He worked his way up at ASU's Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing from Coordinator, to Marketing and Outreach, to Senior Coordinator, segued into the Humanities Lab, also at ASU, as the Public Engagement Coordinator, then finally taking a position with the City of Phoenix Arts and Culture as their Project Manager[49] for six months before leaving Phoenix to enter the MFA program at Colorado State University.

Narrative Transcript Summary

I asked the research questions twice, which is what I usually do. P9 repeated the phrase, "Essential meaning." He then felt the need to rephrase the question, "What is the

[49] The *SAS* falls under the direction of this title, but P9's poem was selected several years prior to his hiring at the City of Phoenix.

essential meaning of the Seventh Avenue Streetscape in terms of *my* lived experience?"[50] And then repeated it for a second time, substituting "ascribed" for "give."

P9 saw *SAS* as an "attempt" by the City of Phoenix to create an "artistic or cultural space" to engage the public, which he thought was more or less successful, but could have been expanded upon. He felt that the baseline for this sort of project was funding artists, and that was a measure of accomplishment for the city, and it did "engage" him as a writer to submit; however, it was limited in that "the best the city can do is just give some people money every once in a while, but . . . that's not what we want." P9 then clarifies that it is not what he wants, but it may be what other wants. He's not negating payment for the art. As a writer, he admits it is "motivating" in that he can justify working on a submission, but what he really wants "is to be in community" with others, and to be "in relationship . . . to build relationships" because he doesn't feel we have that as a city.

He wonders if the city is the correct "entity" for such projects; his answer is that it is not. That "people are responsible for their own lives." Not that he wouldn't want to live in a place that supported community building, and not that he doesn't think Phoenix tries in earnest, nor does he want to negate their projects as missing the mark; however, he feels it is unfortunate that in this country, "everything is . . . temporary . . . short-term and shortsighted."

P9 illustrated his experience as "we do a thing, and it . . . looks good, and it . . . feels good for a second, and then it kind of goes away . . . that's the way that things work

[50] P9 actually stated the question several times before settling on "What is the meaning that is ascribed to the Streetscape for or within my lived experience or that I ascribe to it in like a larger context as like a public art project?"

. . . we don't, for whatever reason, have the capacity or resources to, you know, create more meaning out of these occasions, you know, I mean that's the whole idea of this piece . . . the whole idea, or the whole intention was to . . . create meaning." But P9 thinks there are "so few opportunities for *any* meaning in public life . . ."

"And if we're talking about the physical space of the city, if we're talking about sort of how we gather, you know, so much of it is kind of transactional and impersonal, and not really centered around relationships . . . [or] feelings of belonging or building power for people." He suggestion people are engaging in that sore of connection in Phoenix, but it is outside of the larger corporate or government administrative structures; P9 sees the country and the people in it are "impoverished" when it comes to imagination. He looks at it this way—that not many see art or culture as something they can do as individuals, not as a profession or payment, but to make meaning.

P9 explained that how the people in that single office in the city do it all. He named Estrella and Rosemary, who worked on the project the year his poem was selected, and how they made it all that happen, but he doesn't see those in power thinking in terms of meaning making. In conclusion, he sees the work it takes to build a city or a community, and have it be a "healthy" enterprise, well, he says it may not even be possible.

On the other hand, P9 says he very much "appreciated that opportunity" and said, "It was more significant to me than I realized before this interview . . . I've always had that poem, and I was like 'Oh, I like that,' but . . . I don't think I understood how it sort of fit into the larger narrative or my larger development as a . . . practicing writer . . ."

Though he sees Phoenix as a "big, colonized city." He considers it a new city, a relatively recent city with a history of "displacement, and ongoing displacement of people and communities." He remembers moving here and everyone saying, "Oh, you know, like nobody is from here." He does not see that there is a narrative here, or a street corner, but then contradicts himself and says there is such after all, finally concluding that Phoenix is a challenge, in general and when it comes to development.

"I guess the question that I would have for the Streetscape, or for the Arts and Culture is . . . a question of people's desire . . . their being in the world, and . . . if we are not trying to . . . push people towards a deeper meaning in their lives and in the city, and to . . . have more awareness or perhaps consciousness of how we're moving through this space or what it means I'm not sure . . . then," said P9. He thinks that is something that Arts and Culture can do within an urban space, offer opportunities that bring people together.

Returning to the Streetscape, P9 asks, "What is the impact of this project?" and "How do you measure impacts?"[51] He believes these are the questions we should be asking if we're really trying to serve or help others. He had thought about this a lot with his own work in public art administration and marketing. P9 said the Streetscape had an impact on him as a writer that he "didn't necessarily realize or was able to articulate necessarily prior to this interview."

I reflected to P9, "It sounds like the lived experience that you want is not just yourself, but you want that community aspect of it, that connection with people." P9 totally agreed.

[51] They do not do exit surveys at the city. The neighborhood has not done anything like that either, so the feedback only is anecdotal.

P9 reiterates that "it would be nice if they could have done more or thought about it more, but this is . . . the situation we're in . . . we all have our own lives to lead, and people will lead those lives, regardless." He added, ". . . the city does a lot for arts and culture, like I should be pretty clear about that, especially having worked there, . . . but again, there are these costs of being in a system"—what you can do, how much time you have, what else is on your plate, the pressures and possible burnout of those in administrative positions, and so forth.

Poet-Participant #10 (P10). The interview with P10 took place on Zoom at 1 pm, on Thursday, January 5, 2023, and it lasted close to 90 minutes, with the briefest answer given to the final question; it took about a minute.

Background

P10 has an ASU connection. P10 received his BA in English from ASU, then earned an MA in humanities and an MFA in creative nonfiction from Goucher College and Southern Oregon University, respectively. He was the founding director of the Master of Liberal Studies at ASU, and prior to that he was the Literature Director with the Arizona Commission on the Art, which is where I first met P10. I was just starting out as a poet and he helped me with submissions for grants. Later, I took a graduate translation class with P10 and a travel writing workshop as he is probably best known for his travel writing. We have always kept in touch, and I also interviewed him for an earlier incarnation of my dissertation; in fact, his poem was on the reverse side of mine on the *SAS* panel as we were selected the same year. P10 has won many awards, published many poems, and many translations. He is currently enjoying a very active retirement.

Narrative Transcript Summary

P10 asked for the research question to be read again; he also wanted a moment to think about it. He brought up the poet Shelley, who talks about "poets being the unacknowledged legislators" and then went into a more personal take on his specific poem and the details therein, hoping that readers might look upon "their own lives and clutter and . . . the sentimental connections to those objects." He did not feel they had to throw out everything (he noted he was no Marie Kondo[52]), but he hoped his poem might serve as an impetus for a "wise consideration" of our possessions.

ANALYTIC MEMO WRITING

Reflective memo writing is covered at the beginning of this chapter, though I would add that I used about half of Saldaña's category suggestions for analytic memo reflection, with modifications to fit my study. However, I did not classify the memos further into types of memos, such as coding memo or task memo. It seemed unnecessary due to the small size of my sample and data.

Reflections on Personally Relating to the SAS phenomenon. In the case of *SAS*, I had done most of my research as an observer, and by "most," I mean years of researching its history through both primary and secondary sources, a decade of unsuccessfully submitting poems to the City's Arts and Culture "Call for Submissions" for *SAS* poems, and being possessed by a passion to be part of *SAS* since its inception. I wanted it for my legacy as a poet.

[52] Marie Kondo is a Japanese organizing consultant, author, and television host.

I do not know if envy was involved, but I did study the winning poems for content, format, and craft. I was more methodical than driven in that arena. Although I studied the *SAS* poems, I did not try to repeat what had already been done and won. In my assessment, every poem chosen deserved to be on an *SAS* panel. This seems to agree with the fairness of the judging as was expressed by P3, who had participated on selection committees.

I live less than two miles from the installation, and have since before it was ever conceived. I can walk or ride my bicycle over to Melrose, the neighborhood where *SAS* is located, and relax under a bus stop canopy; they are comfortable, attractive, welcoming, and not heavily used. I might study the poem in front of me, rewrite it, photograph it, imagine my poem being displayed there in the future, and when I was selected, I could visit my poem. Once I was selected, it changed my point of view from observer to participant-observer. I finally had my own *lived* experience of *SAS*, and ultimately, it overrode all the research results provided by others' lived experiences. More on this in Chapter 6.

Some of my personal takeaways were as follows. First, the panels usually remained in place for one year; the idea behind the art/poetry of *SAS* was a rotational exhibit in a canopied bus stop/outdoor gallery. I may have waited ten years to see my poem inside a panel, but it continued in place, year after year, for a total of five years due to cost[53] and Covid. Second, in 2018—the final year *SAS* presented poetry—the "sustainability-themed" poems were dismantled, mine included, and replaced by a

[53] There was the greater expense of hiring a design company to create the 2018 panels than all years prior when a graphic artist worked solo on the designs.

SunBLOCK public art project and “Heat Awareness” campaign. The City of Phoenix Arts and Culture employees who worked directly with poetry are gone, either retired or moved on to other opportunities. Poetry may not be considered again in my lifetime, and I never saw that coming. Passion and obsession have a way of blinding one to allow for being blindsided. In fact, under the wrong circumstances, the panels could be removed to accompany a newer look for today as the panels were an innovation from twenty years past. It could happen. For example, I never thought the late Rose Johnson’s iconic mural, *The Prayer of St. Francis,* at 16th Street and Thomas Road would be painted over, but it was. A few years ago, after approximately a twenty-year run, it was painted over.

As I mentioned, I had a passion for *SAS,* and although I felt most of the poets interviewed had a strong desire to be chosen, demonstrated behaviorally in that some told me either in an earlier interview or earlier in this current interview, that they had written somewhat to the “call”; in other words, sometimes a poet will attempt to ascertain what the judges are looking for and play to that, which may or may not work.

All the selected poets stated, in their own way, that *SAS* was exquisite, well-executed, and so forth, and all greatly appreciated being part of *SAS*; however, I did not find that anyone had the same obsessive attachment to the project as I did before I was selected. By the time I surmised this from my interview data, the gathering phase was complete, and I could not go back and ask further questions without returning to the IRB for changes, approval, and/or continued exempt status. There are several procedures I would have added, changed, or deleted if I had a redo, which is discussed later in this and the next chapter.

When I think about my great interest regarding *SAS* versus the other poets' interest, but to a lesser degree, and without the opportunity to verify my supposition, I came up with three explanations. First, many of the poets did not know of *SAS* prior to hearing about the contest; they had no history of it, no time for bonding, and for some, the first time they saw the Streetscape was when they came to the event (poetry reading) that was tied to the year of their acceptance; second, all the poets were accepted on their first or second try; they did not have the long "hello" as I did—it did not become a challenge of years for them; third, it may be a matter of individual psychology of how a poet construes the importance of *SAS prior* to winning, though several expressed gratitude *after* becoming an *SAS* poet. For a few, it was their first win/publication, and two poets stated they had not realized how much it meant to them until after my interview.

When I first interviewed some of the poets for an earlier version of my *SAS* research, I was an observer only, but for the interviews here, I was an insider, and I could understand the processes along the timeline from acceptance to presentation from my own similar experience, though *similar* is not *same*. Each poet had their own lived experience of *SAS*, which again brings me to mention individual psychology, even though there was much experiential overlap. I believe the overlap was due to most being educated and socialized into the world of poetry, and specifically the world of poetry at ASU. Nine of the ten poets had an ASU connection—that's 90%! And the tenth poet, P2, still had a close connection to the other nine, sociologically speaking, having earned both an MA and MFA, the former earned at another Arizona university, NAU.

They shared *cultural knowledge* of their specific group—poets, educated poets with time in Arizona, and a connection to ASU (or NAU in one case). Cultural knowledge is one of the three fundamental aspects of human experiences, along with cultural behavior and cultural artifacts, studied in cultural anthropology through ethnographic fieldwork (Spradley 5). It is defined as "the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior" (Spradley 6). *SAS* looked at through this cultural lens might break down in this way: poets having shared knowledge (cultural knowledge) allowed them to create poems (cultural behavior/cultural artifacts, respectively), submit their work (cultural behavior), their work became the *SAS* installation (cultural artifact), and culminated in a neighborhood celebration and poetry reading (cultural behavior). In sum, cultural knowledge is fundamentally what leads to generating meaning to cultural behavior and cultural artifacts (Spradley 7). It is that meaning which was the focus of my research—the meaning given to the *lived* experience by the poets. This shared cultural knowledge explains similarities in the codes, and subsequently, the shared patterns of understanding the phenomenon in question.

Basically, all ten poets, regardless of other cultural affiliations and differences, interpreted the phenomenon known *SAS* somewhat similarly; they responded similarly to the "Call for Submissions" (competitively), and they understood they were expected to attend the celebration and participate in the unveiling and attendant poetry reading as an condition of winning. To illustrate further, a person who was not part of this local poetry tribe, might be able to describe the behaviors of the poets, but they would not understand the meanings behind them. And that meaning behind the patterns of behavior, artifacts, and knowledge is culture (Spradley 86). Since culture is *learned,* there may be

similarities found in the selected poets' works, such as line breaks, internal rhyme, image selection because they've shared the same instructors of their craft. It is not mere coincidence that poets quote other poets to explain further their stance or belief systems—that is part of the culture, learned by watching other poets do the same. The cultural connection was also the reason they speak a sort of shorthand with each other. In sum, the homogeneity in the results of this study was unsurprising.

Reflections on Personally Relating to Participants and Participants' Roles/Relationships. In general, without exception, personally relating to the poets was easy and a privilege. I value every one of them as people and as poets. In most cases, these were people I talk with on occasion, and a few, more regularly. If they gave a reading, I'd attend their reading. In some instances, if it had been a while since we last met, we talked for quite some time before beginning the interview.

Every poet-participant seemed eager to participate in the interview, and expressed enjoyment of it afterwards, though there may have been hesitancy in understanding a question or the nature of a phenomenological study. In those instances, I tried to restate the question, support the interviewee,[54] but not lead. Probing is one thing, leading in another. I might have been too careful to avoid the latter, so did not employ the former as much as I wished. On the other hand, there was a purity in allowing an interviewee full reign of their thought progression without any manner of interference as they answered how they interpreted the question. If they asked for clarification, I accommodated.

[54] For example, if an interviewee mentioned they felt like they were repeating themselves, I might say "Repetition is good, and something always comes of it, maybe clarification, maybe additional information, maybe new insight."

As noted in earlier chapters, I had met all the poets and knew most of them personally and professionally before the interview. I had interviewed half of them much earlier when beginning my investigation on *SAS*. I was gathering primary source material, and at that time, I was an observer only to the selected poets; I was not yet a participant, not yet selected.

As far as the role or relationship each poet played in my life, all of them were my peers, if only due to the poetry connection. I would consider at least half of them friends, though all of them could be depending on how defined; for example, everyone was my friend on Facebook. A couple were in MFA courses or workshops with me as classmates, three were my instructors, and I worked for one of the poets as a volunteer editor for his publication. Demographically speaking, the male/female ratio was 6/4, so almost half and half; age breakdown—20s (1), 30s (2), 40s (1), 50s (3), and 70s (3), with the last group all retired; and education—bachelor's (all/10), master's (8+1 in program), doctoral (1). This information will be revisited in analyzing Table 2.

Reflections on Code Choices and Operational Definitions. As explained above, I used the coding found in the Elemental methods category. Its basic, foundational approach made it a good place to start and it served my purpose in building a focused foundation on the two dozen codes I derived through Initial Coding and In Vivo Coding, both of which fall under Elemental methods. Initial Coding was a wise choice for beginning the coding process in that is it open to anything that might be worth pulling out from the data for examination without a predetermined filter and may be used in almost any qualitative research format, from grounded theory to phenomenology; In Vivo Coding falls under Initial Coding; it extracts the exact speech used by the subject and the code takes the form

of quoted material (Saldaña 294-295). Both are considered "first cycle . . . coding processes to be used at the beginning stages of data analysis" (Saldaña 53).

As far as the specific codes, I felt they chose me. They were embedded in the descriptive data as I did not list a code "word" or "term" that I did not find stated at least once by at least one poet-participant. In addition, during the *video* interview, I had an advantage of hearing the inflection of voice and observing non-verbal body language, which may have indicated an emphasis that did not translate into the *written* transcript.

My coding was done manually, which means I did not use a computer program to find and sort codes. Saldaña recommends coding on hard copy in pencil for first-timers and smaller studies to take more control and ownership over the work (29). He also discusses "lumping" and "splitting" of data (23). Lumping occurs when text is grouped together, maybe taking several items, and distilling them down to a single code of essence; splitting can take the same text and find a half dozen codes, each with subtle differences (Saldaña 24).

For example, some *SAS* interview codes were similar enough to be grouped together such as "Aesthetic," "Artistic," and "Beautiful" under the code "Aesthetic/ Artistic"; all three were used as *SAS* panel descriptors, so I "lumped" the word "beautiful" in with the first two terms, but without specifying it as a separate code word in and of itself, partly because it was stated, by the two poets who mentioned it, in such a way to signify that they were referring "beauty" to art. P7 explained that the placement of the poems on panels were "beautifully done," and P8 observed the billboards, as she called them, were "a beautiful piece of art with words on it." Another example of lumping is when "exciting" was subsumed into "WOW!"

An example of splitting was when I created three code categories using nine somewhat related terms, but different enough they needed separation. The codes were "Nice/Really Nice/Good," "Miracle/Miraculous/Splendid," and "Happy/Celebratory/Fun/WOW!" "Splendid" was moved around quite a bit by me. It was originally placed with "Nice/Really Nice/Good," but even "really nice" does not reach the stratosphere of delight that is "splendid." And although "splendid" is not quite a "miracle," I did not see a need for further splitting into its own code, so it became part of the "Miraculous" coding sequence.

A note on "Nice": Ordinarily, I would have ignored such vague terms as "good" and "nice," but a few participants said those words, and I took notice because these are poets. Poets are about words, and the exactness of words—from meaning to image to sound. I once modified a piece of art using the word "nice" in a graduate English paper on *Lolita* by Nabokov. My professor wrote in red ink, "nice?"—the question mark indicating there was a problem and my chosen adjective added nothing to my report. Of course, due to this event, I was somewhat confused and surprised by "nice" being used *by poets* to describe *SAS*. Unfortunately, I missed the opportunity during the interview, in both cases (two poets said "nice"), to probe for more detail.

The conclusion I drew was that poets write and rewrite and rewrite, so an unrehearsed answer to a question not known beforehand would be equal to a rough draft. Had they been given the questions ahead of the interview or allowed to write their responses, or if I had probed, the results would have been more detailed and possibly more intellectually accurate, but less spontaneous or intuitive.

ANALYZING AND INTERPRETING TABLE 2

Antecedent Information: How the table was created, coded, and tallied were covered earlier in this chapter under "Tallying Codes onto a Table" and "Analyzing and Interpreting Tables: First Cycle Coding." For more details on coding and themeing procedures, see "Reflections on Code Choices and Operational Definitions" and "Reflections on Emergent Patterns and Themes" just above in the "Reflections" pages.

Table 2 shows that seven codes had 10% of poets (1 poet) noting the aligned term; another seven codes had 20% of poets (2 poets) naming the aligned term; five codes had 30%, four had 40%, and only one code had 50% and one had 80%. Percentages are slightly higher because P9 was eliminated from the coding as his answers were so different from the other poets that he became an outlier to the coding, so the coding was based on 9 poets instead of 10. It was not that P9's data could not be accommodated and discussed, but it would have skewed the results if included into the coding section. Of course, this belies my professed adherence to qualitative methods in that it is pro forma to remove an outlier data set in *quantitative* research if it is expected to inaccurately skew the results, but in *qualitative* data, the outlier is a welcomed interloper in that it can bring unusual insights, better explanations, and protection against bias (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 296). In fact, qualitative research advises to "*change the model* to accommodate the outlier, rather than try to explain away the "inconvenient" (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 270). It was a missed opportunity, which is discussed in the final chapter; however, I later discovered that P9 was a false outlier due to an interview question error, which will also be discussed in the next chapter.

The code with the most agreement was "Public Space," so having something "Out in the World" appeared to be the common denominator giving essential meaning to the lived experience of a public art installation. That makes sense on the most rudimentary and definitional levels. *SAS* would not be what it is—public art—without the *public* component. At first, this seemed so obvious that it might be overlooked, but upon further inspection, "Public Space" is truly the essence of the *SAS* phenomenon. According to Peoples, "the goal of phenomenological research is to illuminate the lived experience of a phenomenon" (58), and with 80% of the poets declaring the "Public" aspect as part of their lived experience, it made that feature necessary to understanding the phenomenon in question.

To further illustrate this point, consider some of the codes that received only 10%-20% (1-2 poets mentioning a term associated with a code), such as "Transcendent," "Miracle," and "Meaningful"—all of which fell between 10-20%. And those words were expressed by a few poet-participants as their lived experience and from it, the essential meaning derived. And though that was their experience, a public art project can fall short of being a meaningful, transcendent miracle (and many do), yet still *essentially* be considered public art, but if it were removed from its public space, that essence that makes it what it is . . . is gone.

Another observation regarding the coding data concerned the alignment of the poets with each other in describing their lived experience. About two-thirds fell 30% or lower in matching each other's terminology; however, this changes considerably when codes came together under the umbrella of a single theme. The result was much more in agreement with the poets' descriptions. I attributed this to the poets using different

vocabulary to say the same thing, and that vocabulary was similar, but not the same, so it could not be coded together during the first cycle.

As mentioned earlier, it seemed as if deriving themes from codes was not going to happen easily, so I numbered the codes in their alphabetical order on Table 2, wrote one code word on each of twenty-five index cards, and began sorting the cards in like-minded/like-meaning stacks, and before I was finished with my card-shuffling method, patterns were already forming on Table 2. I had six strong themes, and two outliers.[55] Again, I felt I had lived with the data over a long period of time, and all that exposure gave me an intuitive edge. After the themes were determine, they were placed in another table, which is discussed in its own section below. A listing follows of how twenty-three codes became six themes, with two codes remaining:

1. City Creation/Civic Vision + Community Effort/Event = CIVIC ATTRIBUTION/ COMMUNITY.
2. Connect/Share/Encounter/Engage w/ Others + Different Audience (found by) + Empathy/Understanding + Read/Remembered/Enjoyed = CONNECTIONS (OTHERS).
3. Communicate/Interact w/ Poem + Connect/Share/Encounter/Engage w/ Self + Introspective/Deep Experience + Transcendent = CONNECTIONS (SELF).
4. Gift/Enriches + Good/Nice/Really Nice/Neat + Happy/Celebratory/Fun/WOW! + Meaningful/Valued + Miracle/Miraculous/Splendid + Real/Honest/Raw/Pure = POSITIVE EXPRESSIONS.
5. Aesthetic/Artistic + Size/Scale/Big/Large Format/Larger Platform = PUBLIC ART.
6. Different Space (found in) + Fits w/ Environment + Public Space/Out in the World + Showcase/Fantastic Forum + Unexpected/Blindsided = PUBLIC SPACE.

[55] The two outliers expressed the desire for more poetry and/or more public art experiences, but with an understanding that they cannot be conjured or made to happen; both sentiments came in at 20% each.

Table 2 can be found at the end of this chapter.

ANALYZING AND INTERPRETING TABLE 3

As noted earlier, I used Pattern Coding, a second cycle method, for reducing the original twenty-five codes into patterns that eventually formed into six viable themes, which were placed into Table 3. I calculated the number of poets, in percentages, that were aligned with each theme according to the poet's usage of code words falling under those thematic categories as found in their original transcript. Finally, a total was entered for each theme. The mathematical analysis was a process I invented specifically for this study.

Table 3 shows six themes, half with 80% of the poet-participant aligned with those themes— *Aspects of Public Space, Connections/Engagement with Others,* and *Positive Expressions* regarding *SAS,* and. The other half come in at 40%, 50%, and 60%, so average at 50%, which means about half the poets ascribed to those themes, and those themes, from highest percentage to lowest are *Connection/Engagement with the Self, Civic/Community Attributes,* and *Public Art Aspects.*

The highest rating of 80% for *Public Space* as a theme was not surprising given that was the exact number it reached as the highest-rated code (when averaging the number of responses by poets who determined the code word by using it as a descriptor), and could only increase as a theme in that themes are additive from codes. I also retained the same code name when designating the theme.

Connections with Others was also at 80%, again not a surprise as this theme came in second highest percentage as a code at 50%, under the same name as the code, and it gained a few more poets when combined with other codes that could be included under

the same category of *Connection with Others* such as "Empathy/Understanding" or "Audience" (finding and reading the poem). Like the first theme, this theme was another logical choice when used in describing public art. What would be the point without the engagement with the public, without the sharing of experience through poetic expression with the "Other"? These first two categories were definitional in nature, which was ironic considering the decades-long, problem of defining public art itself (covered in chapter 2).

The third and final category with an 80% is *Positive Expressions* (about *SAS*). This theme made it to 80% only because of the additive process I used when calculating the statistics. Had I used another method, it would not hold at 80% as all the individual codes making up this theme fell short of 80%—well short of 80%. There were six codes subsumed under this one theme and the average of their rankings of poets making mention of the terms landed just over 20% (two at 10%, two at 20%, one at 30%, and one at 40%); none of the terms even reached 50%. (Note: These percentage calculations are easily translated into the actual number of poets stating the code word by removing the "0" and the percent symbol.)

Looking at the percentages for the final three patterns, it is a wonder they made it onto the table at all because as individual codes; they came in at very low percentages when averaged as codes, 20%, 25%, and 30% for *Connection with the Self, Aspects of Public Art,* and *Civic and Community Attributions,* respectively. But when seen as a conglomerate of codes labeled as a theme, the numbers increase by 15-20%, and the pattern with the lowest individual code word percentage, came in threefold higher, jumping from a 20% average on the codes to a 60% alignment with poet's lived experience when expressed as a theme.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, Bloomberg and Volpe note that the researcher is the primary instrument of data—collecting, processing, analyzing (30). So much depends on the point of view of the researcher when interpreting the data, but even before that step is taken, the data collected is subjected to researcher bias regarding what is seen and what is not seen. From the very start, there was a determination of the data. And it goes on from there, consciously or unconsciously.

It is most easily seen in the second cycle, when codes were moved into patterns, into themes. I found there was a built-in ambiguity to the nature of themeing. I could have moved a few of the codes into different categories than I had originally placed them, especially if I had not already been familiar with the disposition of the interviewee or if I had not already gone over the transcription several times. Thus, the final result hinged on the researcher.

Table 3 can be found at the end of this chapter.

Table 2

First Cycle Coding—Codes

Key Words/Concepts	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	~~P9~~	P10	Total
Aesthetic/Artistic							√+3	√			5/2
Cannot Conjure or Make Occur						√√		√			3/2
City Creation/Civic Vision		√√√						√			4/2
Communicate/Interact w/ Poem	√√√		√				√√			√	7/4
Community Effort/Event	√	√	√+3				√√				8/4
Connect/Share/Encounter/Engage											--
w/ Other(s)	√+3					√√√	√+4	√+9		√	23/5
w/ Self	√+3										4/1
Different Audience (found by)	√	√	√√	√√							6/4
Different Space (found in)	√	√	√								3/3
Empathy/Understanding	√						√√√				4/2
Fits w/ Environment						√					1/1
Gift/Enriches						√+8		√			10/2
Good/Nice/ReallyNice/Neat	√		√√√	√√							6/3
Happy/Celebratory/Fun/WOW!		√		√	√+3	√+4					11/4
Introspection/Deep Experience	√+3										4/1
Meaningful/Valued								√√			2/1
Miracle/Miraculous/Splendid						√	√√				3/2
Public Space/Out in the World	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√√			9/8
Read/Remembered/Enjoyed				√+7							8/1
Real/Honest/Raw/Pure			√+6								7/1
Showcase/Fantastic Forum		√√√									3/1
Size/Scale/Big/Large Format	√√					√	√+3				7/3
Transcendent						√		√			2/2
Unexpected/Blindsided	√+8	√		√							11/3
Want/Need More/More Often	√					√	√				3/3

Table 3

Second Cycle Coding—Themes

PATTERNS/THEMES	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	~~P9~~	P10	Total
Civic Attribution/Community	√	√	√				√	√			5
Connection/Encounter (Others)	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		√	8
Connection/Encounter (Self)	√		√			√	√	√		√	6
Positive Expressions	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			8
Public Art (Aspects)	√					√	√	√			4
Public Space (Aspects)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			8

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, RESULTS, AND CONCLUSION

Public Art is a multi-faceted concept . . . manifested. It has eluded definition for decades, and to this day, there is no consensus (Allen 246; Knight 23; Phillips 1988: 93). Its access ramp takes many forms, from fabricator to administrator, from artist to audience, from funding source to critic. Its ambiguous nature and "it takes a village" requirement to come into being allows for great variations of lived experience, description, and interpretation, which makes this mysterious phenomenon perfect for exploration into its meaning and essence. And the perfect vehicle for exploring meaning and essence is phenomenology.

Of course, I did not focus on the general topic of public art, but on a specific public art project known as the *SAS,* an installation built into the infrastructure of three shaded bus stops with billboard-like panels that exhibit art and poetry, and functions as a rotational outdoor gallery. My study described and interpreted the essential meaning of the *SAS* as given by poets whose works were selected and became the project itself. The essential meaning was extracted during individual interviews. In sharing the poets' lived experience from submission to selection to set up of the poem onto panels, those who have not had the experience might engage with the results to find meaning behind the explicit to illuminate the ways poets experience an artistic endeavor and aesthetic platform.

The study was based on the theoretical framework of phenomenology. The idea of phenomena is the crux of phenomenological research; it is the study of the way an object shows or reveals itself, how it "appears" (Zahavi 9-10). The goal of this research was to

"uncover the meanings of phenomena" through the experience of the things themselves (Dibley, Dickerson and Duffy 5) or to understand and make meaning from a lived experience "within the construct of experience" (Peoples 3). Phenomenology takes two major forms: Husserlian Descriptive (Transcendental) Phenomenology has the aim of describing an experience to discover its pure essence; Heideggerian Interpretive (Hermeneutic) Phenomenology goes beyond description into interpretation for meaning and context. I employed the latter.

The question asked in phenomenology is, "What is it like to experience a certain phenomenon?" (Peoples 3). When applied specifically to my research study, the central question asked of the poets was, "What is the essential meaning and understanding that you give to the lived experience of the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* project?"

THEMES

The findings of this study are discussed in the context of six themes that emerged from the poet-participants' responses to the research question. This chapter addresses how the research question is answered through the interpretation of the findings within the context of the themes; the limitations and delimitations of the study; and future recommendations. Due to similar words and phrases used for both codes and themes, codes have been enclosed in quotation marks and themes are in italics.

Six themes (*Public Space, Connections to Others, Positive Expressions, Connections to Self, Civic/Community Involvement,* and *Public Art*) are supported by the data and each are discussed individually as to how they emerged, evidence for their existence, and how they relate to the essential *SAS*. I examine each theme, from highest to

lowest scored. Scores were determined by how many poets stated code words which were associated with and eventually categorized under that particular theme.

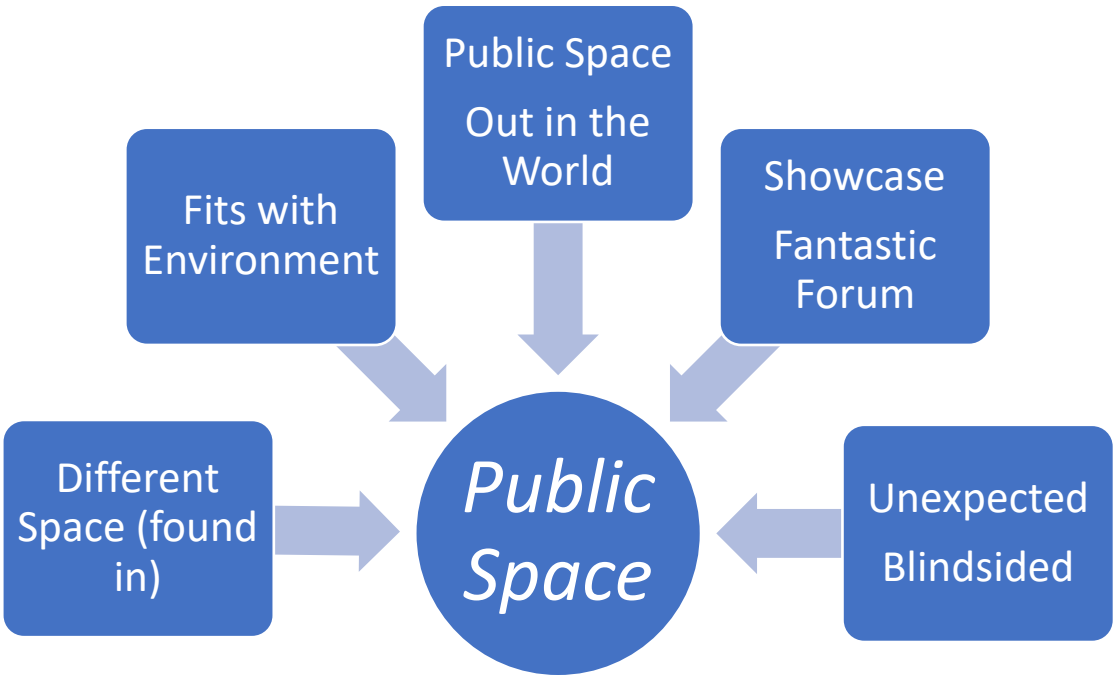

Fig. 15. Relationship of Codes and *Public Space* Theme.

Public Space. This theme aligns with the obvious requirement for public art to be in a public space, and it was noted by 80% of the poets when still only coded as the word "Public Space" and not yet developed into a theme. Though the themeing of the data brought other code words and phrases into play, there is a consensus that the essential meaning of public art/*SAS* must include the experience of the work being found "out in the world." Five of the twenty-five codes were categorized under "Public Space"—two codes expressed how there was an "unexpected" component to public art, how it could be found in a different space so unanticipated as to surprise or blindside the observer, such as a bus stop. Two other codes came in from opposite directions of each other, though not mutually exclusive—that the forum of *SAS* stands out as a showcase for art and poetry,

but it still fits in with the environment. The latter point coincides with the fact that the *SAS* was planned to be built into the infrastructure of the bus stop islands, and it was *not* an afterthought created as an addition to the area. When all the coded data was themed, the result was still 80% under the theme of *Public Space*. Eight out of ten poets mentioned public space in one form or another, but those eight mentioned it in their narrative summaries for a total of twenty-seven times.

In sum, an essence of *SAS* is that it is placed in a public space. Although this seems apparent, part of the phenomenological philosophy is that we do not see what is right in front of us; therefore, it "seeks to understand a phenomenon as it presents itself to us as conscious human beings" (Dibley, Dickerson and Duffy 5). Phenomenology goes beyond what is taken for granted in the lifeworld of our everyday experiences. That the phenomenon of the *SAS* shows itself-in-itself during an encounter with the poets, and they recognized the public-ness of its existence, uncovers an essential aspect of that object in seeking to understand it (Dibley, Dickerson and Duffy 6).

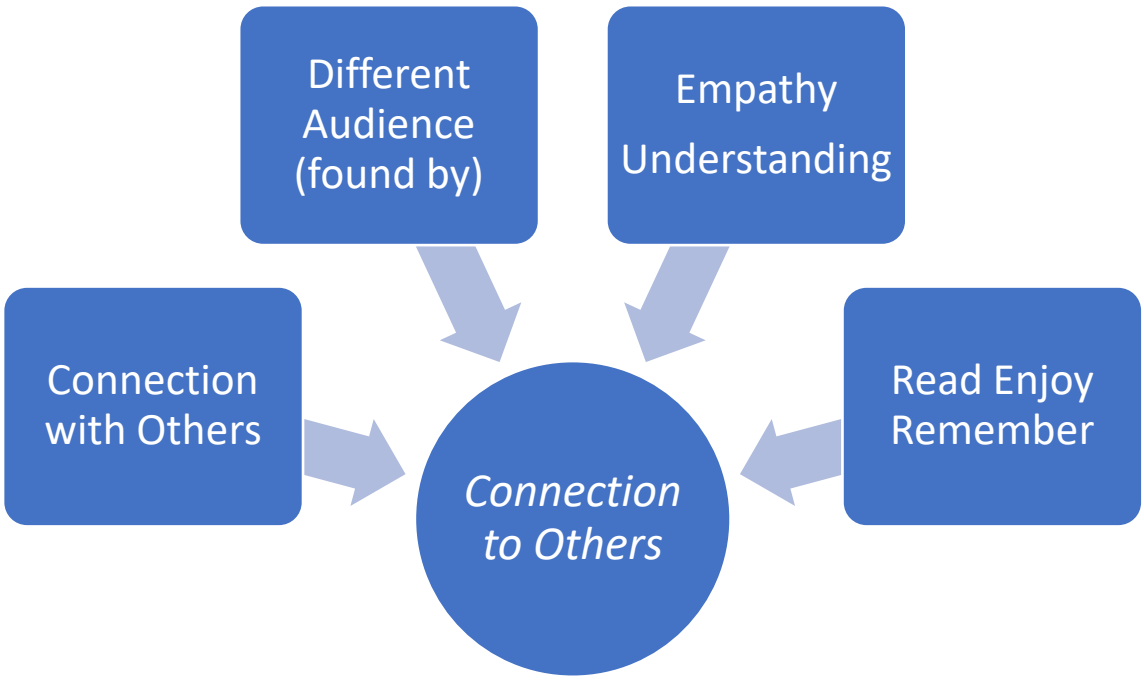

Fig. 16. Relationship of Codes and *Connection to Others* Theme.

Connections to Others. This theme aligns perhaps not with as obvious a requirement for public art as the previous theme, but with a much hoped for consequence of public art. If there is no connection to the other, then what is the point of the art being public? Eighty percent of the *SAS* poets claimed to have experienced that connection with this project once the codes were themed into the broader category of *Connections to Others*; in the coding phase, it reached the second highest consensus (second to the code "Public Space") at 50% when coded for "Connections to Others," the same wording used when themed. It also received a respectable 40% under the code of "Different Audience," which describes populations who would not ordinarily encounter poetry, but they *do* under the specific circumstances created by *SAS*. As with *Public Space, Connections to Others* was mentioned by eight of the ten poets, but it also had the distinction of the

highest number of any theme if counting only the precursor code words at a total of forty-one mentions.

Two poets mentioned “Empathy” and “Understanding” as connections with others. One poet had hoped that someone might read his poem, enjoy it, remember it; he had brought this up in code words eight times through the ideas of memory and remembrance, which seemed to be his own lived-experience theme. He also had kept the miniature model of his poem, which was given out in certain years. Feeling statements, as those mentioned above, act as evidence that the poets themselves had emotional responses as part of their own understanding of the *SAS* experience.

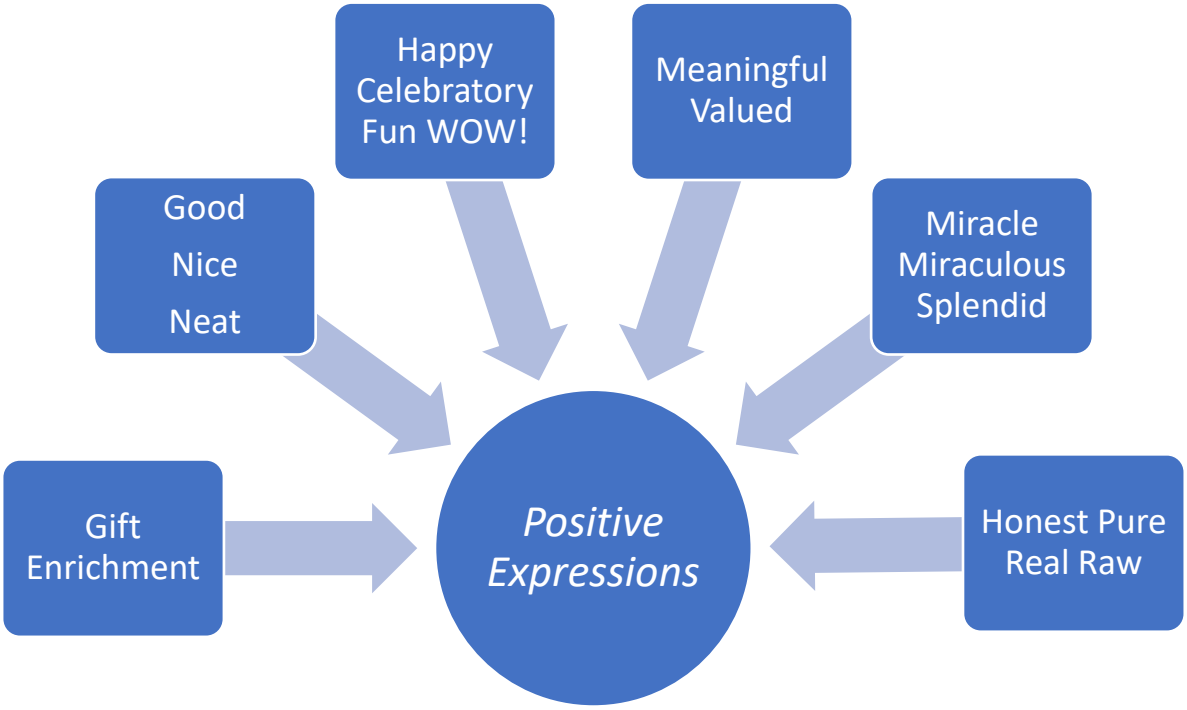

Fig. 17. Relationship of Codes and *Positive Expressions* Theme.

Positive Expressions. This theme speaks to all the happiness, joy, and splendor that the *SAS* brought to the poets. It was also one of the three themes that reached 80% as most of the poets had only good to say about their lived experience of the project, some more

articulate than others as the range of coded words included the nonspecific, though positive, like “Nice,” “Good,” and “Really Good,” to the more ecstatic such as “Celebratory,” “Miraculous,” and “Splendid.” Again, eight out of ten poets had a positive experience as per their description, using words with positive connotations that were coded and tallied at thirty-nine mentions.

It appears that the essence of *SAS*, looking at the top three themes, has to do with being out in public and engaging with the public, all with a positive overlay. Note that the final theme is specific to *SAS* in that some public art, though shared with the public in an accessible space, may not be accepted or enjoyed, but rejected such as the ill-fated *Tilted Arc* discussed in an earlier chapter.

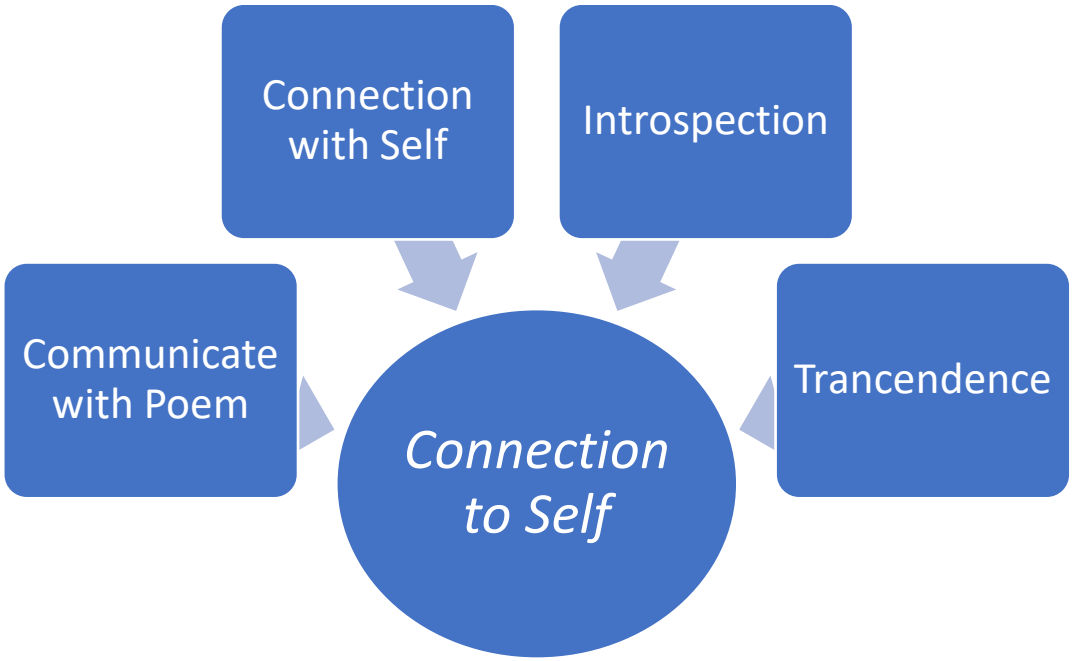

Fig. 18. Relationship of Codes and *Connection to Self* Theme.

Connection to Self. This theme does a turnabout. Instead of having to do with being out in the world and engaging with the public, it is about engaging with the self, inwardly, along

with the outward aspect of relating to the poem . . . in having a communication with the poem that opens the self to introspection, a deeper experience, even transcendence. The theme of *Connections to Self* was at 60%, so more than half the participants had that experience, though the coding only reached seventeen mentions, much lower than higher-percentage themes. A quick comparison might suggest that the main emphasis for the poets' lived experience was for the "other," by making their poem available to the public. The main evidence for this is that each poet, of their own volition, submitted poems for the competition, and having their work seen was part of the lived experience.

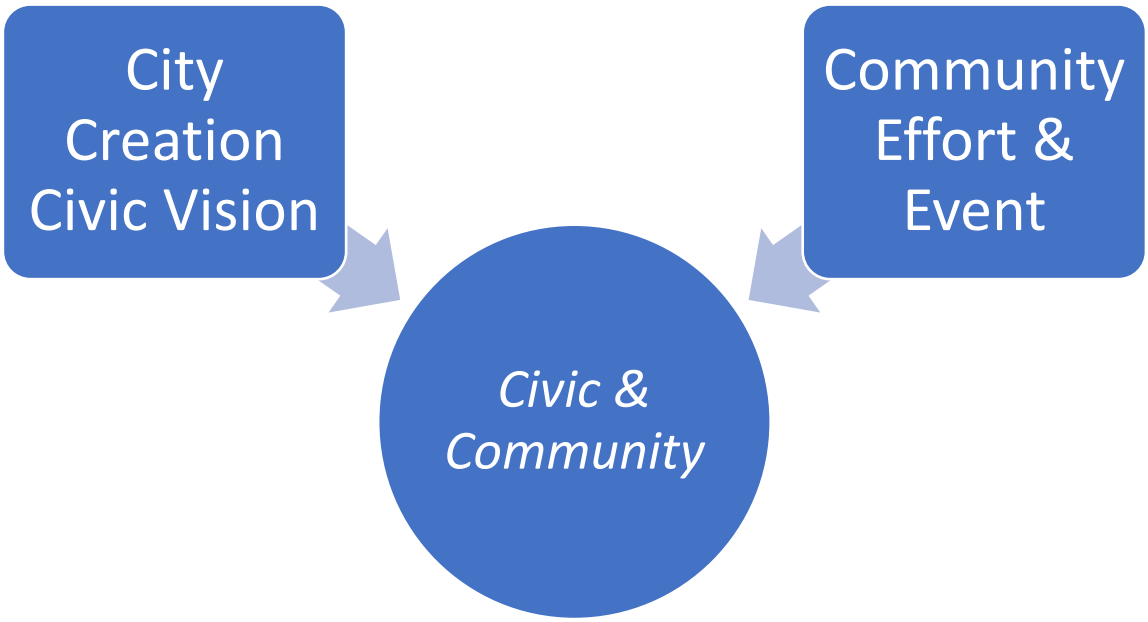

Fig. 19. Relationship of Codes and *Civic/Community* Theme.

Civic/Community. Attributing the manifestation of *SAS* to civic and community involvement came in at 50%; therefore, half the poets felt there was a civic and/or community contribution. Indeed, the City of Phoenix and the Melrose Neighborhood are responsible for *SAS* coming into existence. In Chapter 2, the historical context is covered in detail, and it all began with the community and the city working in tandem, and

somehow that essence is translated into the *SAS* experience. It comes though perhaps on an intuitive wave, but also the Melrose Neighborhood is concrete evidence to community participation. A brief anecdote: When I was co-hosting the first year of the *Phoenix Poetry Series*, we held it at Copper Star Coffee, the owner of which was one of the initiators for change in the declining neighborhood. Even though we had a standing reservation once a month, if a community meeting was called, we were bumped to the outdoor patio, complete with all the 7th Avenue traffic noice. They put their neighborhood community ahead of everything else.

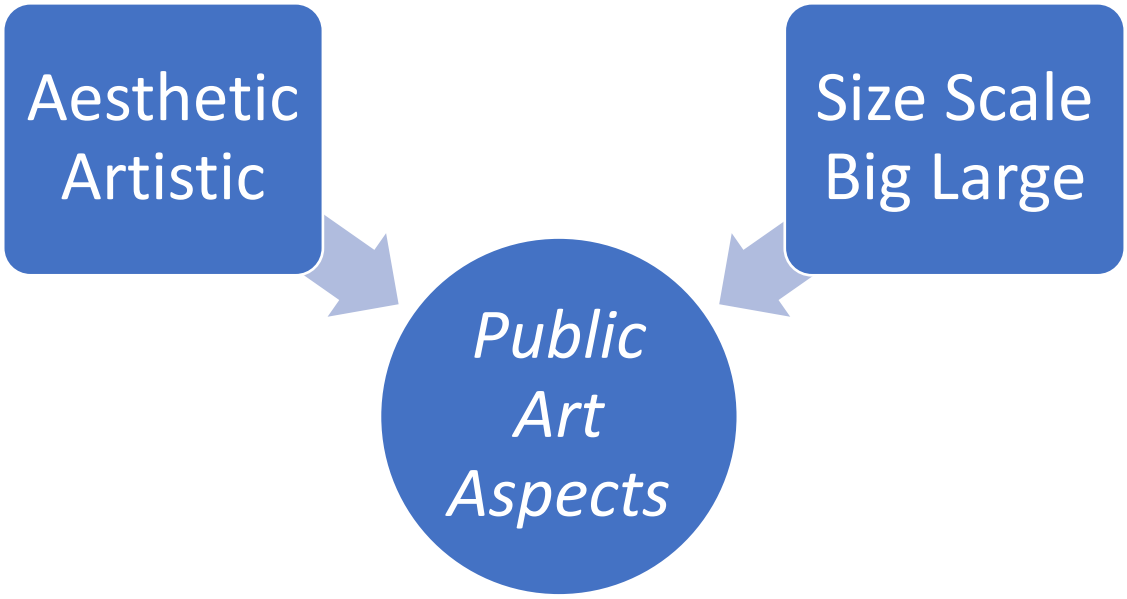

Fig. 20. Relationship of Codes and *Public Art* Theme.

Public Art. The final theme considers the actual structure itself as mentioned by 40%[56] of the poets, close to half. Of the twelve comments made through code words, a little more

[56] As a sidenote, I think the percentage is, more accurately, about a third, or 30%. I felt I led one poet (not probed, but led) into commenting about the size of the panels. He did seem very interested in that segue once it was offered, but I do not believe the poet would have gotten there on his own were it not for my comment during the interview.

than half noted the scale of the project, and how the larger format played into the magnificence of *SAS*. One poet mentioned that a poem on its large platform scale has a tenfold effect on the viewer.

If taken together, all six themes illustrate the essential qualities of *SAS*; it is a larger-than-life (for the area), municipal public art display, bringing lyric words together to form a pleasant and palpable experience from the poet to the individual in an outdoor setting.

WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS

The nature of almost anything is that once you have completed the work, and if you are paying attention, you can always see where you could have done better, especially if given an opportunity for the proverbial "Do Over." The problem with that way of thinking is the do over will only lead to another do over—there is always something else because research itself is a conversation with all that went before and all that will come after. There is no end. You cannot complete something that is theoretically infinite. That said, there are several things I would have done differently and others I did well.

Learning Moments from the Negative. I saw lost opportunities in the interview process where I could have probed further and elicited more detailed description—thicker, richer description—but I could only see that happening if I could secure a second interview with the poet-participants. I say this because until I saw the transcripts, which manifested after-the-fact of the interview, I did not notice when or where I could have elicited more

from the poets.[57] During the actual interview, it was very difficult to assess how it was going, unless it was going so terribly wrong it would be difficult to miss. In addition, in my attempt to avoid "leading" the interviewee, thereby possibly interfering with their process and response, I did not probe as much as I felt I should have probed. However, I did not incorporate a second or follow-up interview in my IRB request, so there was no entrance for further questioning without going through their approval process again.

Also, the poet-participants lead very active lives, even those who are retired (they comprised about a third of the poets). I am not certain I could have scheduled their participation in a second interview given that the first interview lasted almost two hours for half of the participants; I know I would have not been comfortable recruiting them for further consultation. Otherwise, I would have loved to have conducted a focus group among the poets. It would have provided a different kind of give and take—not limited to my questions—something much more expansive engaging five or six poets in a group. They would play off each other, and it could unfold in unpredictable ways, so unpredictable I cannot imagine what kind of data it would produce.

I was also very conscious of the time when an interview progressed past the ninety-minute mark. I would have felt this bit of tension whether I knew the participants or not; it was as if I was willing the interviewee to stay until finished, so there was a split in my focus. I am asking the questions, I am listening to the answers, but I am also monitoring any reactions, perhaps in the form of body language, for any indication that the participant was nearing their endpoint.

[57] A pilot might have alleviated some interview issues. It would have been a practice interview to inform, direct, and correct; however, my sample was small, and time was short. I did not want to "use up" any poet on the pilot, nor spend time setting up and conducting a pilot interviews, respectively, though it would have been wiser to test the research instrument in that way.

Finally, I did very well with the IRB procedure, and I received an exempt status. I attended IRB workshops, completed required and optional tutorials, and received certificates showing I was prepared; however, I wish I understood still more about the process at the time. If I knew what I know today, I would have required a demographic survey of my poets if only to reduce the time it took me to compose their biographical data. I had to do my own research, verify information, and go on what I already knew about them.

Probably my greatest transgression was defaulting to a quantitative bent in my qualitative research, creating a postpositivist report. That switching back and forth of camps manifested in a couple ways. One was removal of an outlier from the statistical calculations; this should not have been done in that by eliminating the possible messiness of difference, it also eliminated an individual's voice, making the study incomplete in its assessment of the essential, which need not be a generalization. Two, the use of statistical calculations themselves as a default access to meaning illustrated my hesitancy to put full dependence on the narrative when analyzing my data. I simply felt more comfortable with numbers present because of early background training in mathematics and the sciences, and yet, theoretically and experientially, I understand the power of "story." It is the currency of my daily life. And three, the sample size was too small for any realistic evaluation in the quantitative sense, though I even considered a statistical analysis on the numbers I collected, but I knew that was a calculation too far and did not belong in this study.

Learning Moments from the Positive. Since I knew the poets participating in my study, at no time did I feel there was any "participant reactivity" due to them knowing me. The

interviews felt very “clean” except for the one time I felt I may have led an interviewee in a certain direction, which I mentioned earlier (I believed my comment was more than a probe). I see this as a strength of the research: I knew my poet friends well enough that they were comfortable to be themselves and answer accordingly.

Another strength of the study was my status as a participant-observer. Had I not been selected in 2018, I would still not have experienced *for myself* the process of becoming part of the *SAS* project. I understood, whether or not I agreed, every comment made by the other poets because I was there myself. I had the *lived* experience. The irony was that in my lived experience of this research journey, I discovered I would not have had the same understanding of the phenomenon, regardless of the data, without having the experience myself. I say this because for many years, before my poem was chosen, I was only an observer, and during that time, I conducted interviews with many *SAS* poets, some who participated in this current study and others who did not. My understanding of their experience from those interviews was partial, though I did not realize it until this recent version of my study as a participant-observer. As a fellow participant, I had a greater, more complete understanding of what the participants were communicating. I believe there is no substitute for having had an experience firsthand; yet, there is always some projection because I am filtering their experience through the understanding of my own.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the major discovery was an unexpected finding: *Public Space* came in as the primary aspect mentioned by the poets as essential to the meaning of the *SAS*. I predicted *Connection to Others* would lead, but even going into the interviews with that bias, *Connection to Others* came in second. While interviewing, I

heard what I was listening for, which was "connections to others in the community," and I had not even noticed the much said about *Public Space,* yet when I read the transcript, there it was, notably ranking higher than any other code, and subsequently, equal to the top three themes. When the codes were themed, *Connection to Others* did move up and placed the same as *Public Space,* but it only did so when other code words, though not the exact wording of the category label, were deemed to denote its theme.

Though I was surprised at this outcome, it can be phenomenologically explained in that we do not notice what we see in our everyday world. The most obvious trait regarding public art is that it is placed in an accessible public space. The phenomenon presented that aspect of itself to the poets when they "return[ed] to the thing itself,"[58] an edict given by Husserl, the principal founder of phenomenology (Vagle). I cannot think of a better argument for the credibility (validity) of a phenomenological study than the lived experience of a public art piece illustrating its most integral, essential quality.

COMMENTARY/CONCLUSION

According to Wolcott, there is a "dichotomous thinking" in research that it must be either "decision-oriented or conclusion-oriented" (Wolcott 113). This brings qualitative research to its knees before quantitative research; therefore, my conclusion will read more as commentary.

Research—What I Attempted. My research intention was to discover the essential meaning given by selected poets through the lived experience of their participation in the

[58] This quote is a paraphrase of a major Husserl principle of phenomenology, stated by Mark D. Vagle in our discussion during an office visit at Arizona State University. Professor Vagle's specializes in phenomenology, specifically post-intentional phenomenology.

SAS project, then extrapolate an understanding of that experience. Data was gathered in one-on-one interviews; data was analyzed into codes and interpreted into themes. Though the essential meaning was categorized into shared unique patterns, it was with the aim of understanding the nature of that phenomenon and adding the general knowledge of the lifeworld. It was not for generalization nor prediction.

Results—What I Learned. I discussed earlier that I would have done some things differently had I another chance; however, I do not believe that *more* data would have constituted *different* data; therefore, the results would have been the same. A reason for this is the homogeneity of the sample as discussed earlier. Another reason is that as the researcher, I would be bringing myself to the study, still carrying and unaware of blind spots from the initial research. Yes, I have realized some of my missteps and could correct course by either not falling into quantitative methods while proposing a qualitative approach or declaring a mixed-methods study from the start. If the former, there is room enough for all voices, however divergent, and I now realize that I do not need numbers to back up my results to appease a real or imagined authoritative structure.

My results do not need to be neat and tidy, but may reflect the co-existence of differences and mirror the entropic nature of life. Perhaps my leaning on the quantitative exhibits the instinct to battle disorder and the constant incoming of information demanding acknowledgement, assimilation, and eventually accommodation. I might even wonder if it was not the controlling aspects that partially explains Heidegger's personal affinity for fascism. Clifford Geertz, the famous cultural anthropologist, noted in a chapter on "Thick Description" from The Interpretation of Cultures, "The force of our interpretations cannot rest, as they are now so often made to do, on the tightness with

which they hold together, or the assurance with which they are argued. Nothing has done more, I think, to discredit cultural analysis than the construction of impeccable depictions of formal order in whose actual existence nobody can quite believe." (Geertz 19-20).

A note on the outlier whom I subjected to correction by dismissing their voice from the data—it was a *false* outlier. I would not again leave out the different or the other when compiling data, though I might if it was a function of the method to where it was no longer the study I had intended,[59] and this is now the case with P9, the (false) outlier.

I discovered my mistake when I began to work on the last part of the dissertation. I planned to incorporate the poetic into the dissertation as a coda. As the concluding passage, it would serve as a functional, phenomenological experience in the genre of a cento comprised of ten stanzas, each using the vocabulary curated from the poets' original transcript of the final research question (see appendices); each stanza takes on its own form as dictated by how the poets' words spoke to me—in couplets, quatrains, even as a prose poem. The process entailed making a copy of all the final question transcripts (not the reduction narratives), eliminating lines that were not usably "poetic"—certainly a judgment call; I took words, phrases, and lines, arranged them aesthetically and meaningfully, and revised, revised, revised. The result is somewhat like story of *The Blind Men and the Elephant,* where each man comes away with his own version regarding the truth of an elephant based on the limited angle of the approach to their experience.

Returning to the outlier situation, as I was closely reading over the transcripts and the narratives, I discovered that P9 had restructured the final question into something

[59] This kind of situation could prompt its own investigative analysis.

other than what I was asking. It is on the tape and the transcript, yet I noticed neither the change nor the impact it had on how he answered until I was making the composite poem. P9 had repeated my question a few times, and even made a meta comment that he could "rephrase" the central question of my research. I remember it clearly because he used the word "ascribed" and that word seems loud to me, enough that I stopped and assessed whether it would make a difference in the meaning of my question. Upon doing this, I failed to notice that he added on to the question, which completely changed the meaning and direction, a direction he followed in his answering: "What is the meaning that is ascribed to the Streetscape for or within my lived experience or that I ascribe to it *in like a larger context as like a public art project?*" The emphasis in italics is mine and was not in my original question, which was, "What is the essential meaning and understanding that you give to the lived experience of the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* project?" In my question, there is no mention of a larger context; it is a personal, lived experience to which one gives there own personal meaning. And I did not catch the error. In sum, I now do not consider P9's answer to be that of an outlier, but a valid answer to *his* version of my question.

Despite this error, even if I had included P9's answers, I believe that, my interpreted results confirmed a plausible description of the lived experience of the *SAS*: A large format, well-executed, outdoor public art installation, administered by the City of Phoenix Arts and Culture, located in the midtown neighborhood of Melrose, through which artists and the community are connected by poetry—poetry which may lead to a deeper experience of the self and others . . . and just plain happiness.

Recommendations. I would have an interest in two future studies. One study would be conducted with the ten remaining (qualifying) *SAS* poets that were not participants in my study, using the same methodology (done correctly—no casting off outliers, every response is included), and comparing the results with the cohort I interviewed. My guess is that the outcome would be similar, in part because the poets participating in *SAS* are a fairly homogenous group due to their connections with ASU's creative writing workshops.

The second study that I suggest would be the application of the same procedures on poets involved in a different public art project. Phenomenology is not concerned with generalizing, but it would be interesting to explore in that direction. My guess is that the results, again, would be similar, as the essentials of public art poetry are probably not that far apart from each other, though perhaps the results would not be, and the homogeneity of the *SAS* group might account for the difference, but that kind of analysis is not aligned with phenomenology. Obviously, these two suggestions reveal there is a part of me leaning toward traditional, quantitative science, though I am also strongly attracted to quantitative approaches. Maybe my best practice would be the marriage of mixed-method investigations.

FINAL THOUGHTS

> "What then can help us on our way? One thing only: philosophy."
>
> —Marcus Aurelius

CODA

Seventh Avenue Streetscape Cento

—in the voices of the interviewed poets

I

Art exists—beyond the universities, beyond the workshops, beyond the classrooms—
shared, lived, common human experience. The goal—to get it out there a different way.
Putting art in public spaces, reaching different audiences, reaching different audiences
in a different time in a different place
where you don't expect to see, where you don't expect to read, at bus stops—bus stops,
subways, elevators—in motion.

Private introspection in public—all at once, those little moments of rush
in the morning in the afternoon,
take that bus, sit next to someone you don't want to sit next to…

You're quiet, you avert your gaze, focus on the poem, this moment, introspective, deep.
You recognize yourself in someone else's work. You may think about someone ill,
who is at home, or the loss of someone, or the love of someone.
You recognize your own stories. You don't expect it.

How important it is to do . . . how important it is to see. Art can blindside you,
catch you in a park, looking at a poem so large. You know, Art will. Anywhere.

II

Showcasing, showcasing
the artist, the artist and poet pairings.
Where do you find poetry?
Who may stumble upon it?
Finding a poem is exciting.
Oh, yes, is your poetry in there, too?

It's kind of in the business district.
I want to say it could be San Francisco.
It could be New York.
This may not have been a city.
I don't, I don't remember, but it’s there,
the word “civic” is, yes,
a kind of civic leadership and vision.

III

A clever way
a built environment
a public art project.
I don't know that it ever gets any better.

There's a rawness to it. You get the writers,
the artists, the community, the fabricators,
involved and together and then we take it
to this noisy, noisy bus stop, a place
where real people are riding buses
people get on buses, people who wait
at bus stops will get on buses.
They experience it and it's real.

It doesn't apologize for itself, it doesn't
water itself down.

In the early days, they were real poems
as pure as it gets. The selection process,
the years when I was choosing,
we would choose both art and poetry,
one on one side, one on the other.

We chose the art we liked, we chose
the poems we liked, and we'd vote.

This big panel, this big room
full of people, then the big party.
The big party honored the community,
honored the artists, honored the poets.
People came to look at art, to talk about art.

We all read our poems. And it was splendid.

IV

Fun memory that's the reason I kept the small one, the scale model they gave us.
framed it, added a backlight like the original.

It's plugged in & on where I can always see it in the space where it's a reminder
when that was my focus, my focus shifted over the years.
a reminder
out in public, somebody waits for the bus, reads it, enjoys it, moves on with their day.

At the time, I was invested, hoping someone would read it & remember it & hold onto it.
I'm not in that space anymore where I care
as much.
Maybe somebody remembered it . . . existed.

V

I think of it—as a celebration, you know—a celebratory experience.
I enjoy, I benefit, I celebrate—
when I see that poem and that artwork.
It still makes me happy.

VI

Poems are gifts, first of all . . . because this is a gift . . . it is a gift.
It's not *all*, that's the thing, it's not *about*.

I don't want to be precious about it . . . it can be a gift,
without making a big deal about itself being a gift.

When it goes out like that, big and out (hands motion wide, upward, and outward)
whooshing into the public space as the other.

That philosophical thing: between the self and the other, the other would be the other, the other would receive from the universe, the other knowing there's a writer behind it.

But the thing is: There it is—all in the world of self. It is huge . . . and a gift,
not like Santa, I don't claim that—I mean I'm aware of the actuality of it.

I'm walking down the street, and I'm this person going for the bus, and I see this, "Oh, oh," this is like encountering a jasmine flower or this is like encountering "WOW!"

"WOW! Thank you, Universe." And when that happens, it's just there, and I go, "Wow!"
I cannot conjure it. A miracle . . . from the ordinary.

VII

Yeah. The essential meaning. Yeah. I'll think a second . . . Essential meaning. Yeah, got it, yeah, I feel like I'm repeating the essential meaning. I'll try and say something more, with a little depth. Right, right. That makes sense. Yeah, well, I would say, yeah, the essential meaning. Such a large platform makes the world more welcoming, more pleasing, a more aesthetically pleasing place connecting human beings. An empathy exchanged—less isolated in a difficult world, a challenging, mysterious world. It happens when reading a book or when reading a journal, an individual poem. The effect is tenfold, multiplies in that set up in a public space where people are going about their lives, going to work or the grocery store, taking a walk, connecting with them on that level—the beautifully done, the aesthetically pleasing—maybe not knowing how effective it is, or how powerful, but I've had that experience just as I know you have, and it's like no other experience, and can affect powerfully as if stricken. So, I continue to read for that experience. And I learned how poetry should have a function in all societies and cultures, how it brings people together, how it's related to song and the miraculous human voice, with the ability to tell stories and communicate feelings, whether it's poetry, song, drama, whatever. Poems show me that I can feel—I can feel awe, I can feel terror, between

the grief and the anger, between a kind of apathy, I can feel the air, I can hear the cadence of the speaker, see the images given . . . language absolutely transferred to the reader—the awe, the terror, the grief, the sadness—even poems about the worst experience, the most horrifying experience, there is a triumph—a triumph because it makes us feel less isolated, and it makes us feel like there is an understanding out there that can be communicated and transferred through the written word that is miraculous, and I keep reading poetry because I hunger for those experiences, I keep reading to find those experiences. Yeah, yeah, something profound I couldn't understand, shining light onto darkness. Yeah, definitely yeah.

VIII

A stranger messages me.

She rides her bike past those billboards,
on her way to work or school or something,
on a daily or weekly basis, and the billboard,
a beautiful piece of art with words,
instead of an ad for something no one needs.

She stops, reads, sees my name, finds me on Instagram.

She posts a picture of my panel, tags me, we have a short exchange, back and forth.

She likes the poem, and we talk, transcending our connections.

We have a conversation about it being pretty, about it being a poem—a thing by someone she kind of knows now, that we have a connection, that we've had a conversation.

I am a writer, there's a reason I'm doing this—
bringing conversation, making daily life meaningful, deepening connections,
connecting with those who have no connection to us.

I, as a writer, believe there is value in words, it means something having it affirmed,
a poem among strangers allowed to find it, find me.

Cities do projects that are beautifying, even that on its own, makes life better.
But then, to connect with others, makes it even more so . . .

IX

Challenging, for there are costs to being in a system:
What are you able to do, how much time you have to do it, what else is coming in,
The pressures, and the people who do so much
Get burned out in those positions.

The city does a lot. I know, I've worked there.
They could have done more or thought about it more.
The situation we're in, with our own lives to lead, and people will lead those lives,
Regardless of whether or not the city offers an opportunity to a few folks for money.

Yes, I can, I can kind of get a little pessimistic, perhaps about the city or entire country.
I think it was good for what they were able to do with it.
I think, again, of those questions like capacity and knowledge,
If we're trying to serve or help people, then "What is the impact we're going for?"

Did it have an impact, *how* did it impact? "What is the impact of it?"
And I think a lot about this: "What is the impact of this project?"
The *Streetscape* had an impact, it had an impact on me as a writer that I didn't necessarily
Realize or was able to articulate . . . "How do you measure impacts?"

Not in a negative way, "growing" is maybe the term for it, I don't know. We left,
We had reasons and other opportunities, the way downtown developed is hard for people
Who have been here, seen what has come before it. The question I have for art
And for culture is a question of people's desire, their being in the world.

If we are not trying to push people towards a deeper meaning in their lives and in the city,
Toward more awareness or consciousness of how we're moving through this urban space
Or what it means to us. The urban space is challenging. With opportunities, it opens up,
Brings people together, what art and culture does in an urban space has to be negotiated.

This city in general is a very challenging place, the development here is a real challenge.
Relatively recent as far as cities go. Its own history compared to others, a lot of early
Displacement, and ongoing displacement of people and communities who livehere,
Where is that narrative in the city, where is that street corner? A big, colonized city.

It was more significant to me than I realized. Appreciated the opportunity.
I've always had that poem, but if we are talking about trying to build something,
It takes work to build a city and a community, to have a healthy city, maybe
Such a thing is not even possible. Miss E and Miss R made it happen, that's great,

They've lots going on, people who are in power, they don't really think in this way,
Maybe they don't have to. And if we're talking about the physical space of the city,
If we're talking about how we gather, so much of it is transactional impersonal not really
Centered around relationships, feelings of belonging, or building power for people.

Those things do happen, they happen in spite of, against, outside these larger structures,
The imagination of the country is impoverished, people's imaginations are impoverished,
Few think art, culture or writing can be what we do, not as a profession, not for payment,
But as an individual, few have the privilege to engage in meaning making, so no wonder,

When you have this many people and one office in a city, it just comes down to people.
I understood how it fit into a larger narrative, my larger development as a quote/unquote
Practicing writer, or whatever. There's few opportunities for *any* meaning in public life,
In what we do. We could . . . the whole idea, the whole intention was to create meaning.

The way things work, we don't, for whatever reason, have capacity or resources to create
More meaning out of these occasions, the whole idea of this piece. It's unfortunate.
We do a thing, it looks good, it feels good for a second, and then it kind of goes away.
I would love to live in a city, a state, or a country that cared, supported, built community

Or tried to, we tried, the city tries these things often . . . I don't want to say "falls short."
That's not fair to any of the projects, but they are so temporary, short-term, shortsighted.
Certainly, a question of whether the city can or should be the entity responsible.
Cerrtainly it isn't. People are responsible for their own lives. Some want it, I personally

As a writer—that's not what I want. It's motivating, incentivizing, engaging, provides
justification spending time on it but what I want, what I really want is to be in community
With others. To be in relationship, to build relationships, we don't have that as a city.
People—we need it. If that's all we do, metaphorically, figuratively, in this city, any city,

That's great, but it's limited, right? A sad fact, the best a city, as an official entity,
The administration of a city, doing this, that, certainly there might be other ways.
The city, the sense of people, the best the city can do is give some people some money
Every once in a while, that's not what we want as writers We lay a baseline.

Money to folks who do creative work—a pretty good measure of success. The project . . .
I mean I think I guess, essentially, I mean I think I see—an attempt towards something,
An attempt to create artistic, cultural space within the city in a public way that engages
An attempt that was successful in some ways, could have been expanded upon in others.

What is the essential meaning in terms of *my* lived experience? The question, I can rephrase it. What is the meaning within my lived experience that I ascribe to it, that I ascribe to it in the larger context of a public art project?
Essential meaning.

X

Let me think about...
When Shelley talks of poets being unacknowledged legislators,
I hope people who see that poem think on their own lives, and clutter, and connections, the sentimental connections to objects in their own lives,
they don't have to throw everything away because of me. I don't believe in that, though wise consideration of what we have is important . . .

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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Hello ____!

As some of you may know, I am pursuing my PhD in Literature at Arizona State University. My research focuses on poetry and public art, specifically the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape (SAS)* located in midtown Phoenix. It involves conducting a phenomenological study on the meaning given to the *lived* experience by the poets who participated in that project. The information obtained, once analyzed, will give insight into the poets' essential and contextual meaning of *SAS,* leading to a better understanding of artists' perspectives in order to inform future public art practice and to expand the knowledge base of the lifeworld we inhabit.

You are receiving this recruitment invitation because you are a poet whose poem, at one time, had been selected and displayed as part of *SAS*. I am writing today to ask if you would take part in a conversation, by Zoom, where we would discuss various aspects of your *SAS* experience.

Participation is voluntary and choosing to not participate has no consequence. If you choose to participate, you may opt out at any time. A signed consent form is required prior to participation in this study. Participation consists of a 45-minute, Zoom-recorded interview and the subsequent reading of your interview transcript to make additions, corrections, and/or deletions for clarification. You should receive a transcript two-to-three weeks after the interview via email.

Interviews will be conducted from late November through mid-January. All work, including transcript review by the participant, is expected to be completed no later than the end of January 2023. Participants will receive a Changing Hands Bookstore $15 gift card at that time.

For further information or questions concerning the research study, please email me at lynn9@asu.edu or call/text (602) 212-1771.

Many thanks for your time and your consideration! I hope everything is going well for you and that you're enjoying the life of a poet.

Sincerely,
Nadine

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

PERMISSION TO TAKE PART IN A HUMAN RESEARCH STUDY

I, Nadine Lynn Lanier, am a doctoral student under the direction of Professor Heather Maring in the Department of English, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Arizona State University. The Principal Investigator is Professor Sarah Amira de la Garza, Associate Professor, Hugh Downs School of Human Communication, also at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to investigate selected poets' *lived* experience of the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape (SAS)* project, a local public art installation located in the historic Melrose neighborhood district of central Phoenix.

The information obtained, once analyzed, will give insight into the poets' essential and contextual meaning of *SAS,* leading to a better understanding of artists' perspectives in order to inform future public art practice and to expand the knowledge base of the lifeworld we inhabit. The study data will be used in my dissertation, publications/journal articles, and conference presentations.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve a 45-minute conversation on Zoom regarding your experience with *SAS* as a selected poet who has participated in that project. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time. You will be given a transcript via email of your interview approximately two-to-three weeks after the interview to make additions, corrections, and/or deletions for clarification purposes. Upon receipt of your reviewed transcript, you will receive a Changing Hands Bookstore $15 gift card to thank you for your contribution to my study.

The interview will be recorded on Zoom, a video conference platform which records an audio and a video track. I will use *only* the audio track for this analysis. If you would like to participate in an *audio only* interview, you may turn off your camera. You may also change your mind after the interview begins. The interview will not be recorded without your permission.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study.

Your responses will be confidential. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications, but your name will not be used. Results will be discussed in aggregate form. Direct quotes from our conversation used for illustrative purposes will remain anonymous.

Data recordings (audio and video) will be password protection and stored on ASU cloud storage. Hard copy materials (transcriptions, signed consent forms) will be stored in my locked home office to which only I have access. Research data will be stored separately from identifying materials. Data will not be shared. I will be the only person with access to the data. The data will be stored for three years, at which time it will be destroyed according to ASU procedures.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team: Principal Investigator, Dr. Sarah Amira de la Garza, delagarza@asu.edu, 480-965-3360/480-965-5095 or Nadine Lynn Lanier, lynn9@asu.edu, 602-212-1771. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

By signing below, you are agreeing to be part of the study.

Name:

Signature: Date:

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Sarah De La Garza
CLAS-SS: Human Communication, Hugh Downs School of
480/965-3360 delagarza@asu.edu

Dear Sarah De La Garza:

On 11/22/2022 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Selected Poets' Lived Experience of the Seventh Avenue Streetscape Project: A Phenomenological Study of Meaning and Essence
Investigator:	Sarah De La Garza
IRB ID:	STUDY00016944
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Consent Form, Category: Consent Form; • Interview Guide, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • IRB Protocol, Category: IRB Protocol; • Recruitment Email, Category: Recruitment Materials;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2)(ii) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (low risk) on 11/22/2022.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).
If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

Icebreaker

Please tell me how you became a poet. [Probe] What made you want to become a poet? To which genre of poetry or poets were you drawn and why?

Starter/Background Questions

There is a saying in Tai Chi, "We always begin at the beginning."

So, how did you first come to know about the *SAS* project?

How do you explain your selected status through your own lived experience?

What does "selection" represent to you?

What factors do you perceive led to your poem being chosen?

What is your background and preparation for this event—long-term and short-term?

What obstacles did you overcome and/or what opportunities did you take which led to your success?

What changes did you experience from submission to selection to (poem-panel) setup?

How did *SAS* impact your lived experience and perception of yourself as a poet?

And what is the lived experience (adjustment?) after obtaining a *SAS* alumni status?

Main Interview Question

What is the essential meaning and understanding that you give to the lived experience of the *Seventh Avenue Streetscape* project?

[Probe] Can you give an example of that lived experience? Can you tell me how you came to that understanding?

APPENDIX E

POET #1—CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION TRANSCRIPT

Poet #1/Batch 1a
Interview Date: January 4, 2023, Noon
Interview Length: 1:51:38

[Start Time] 12:14:07

[PI] 13:42:11
So here's our main interview question, the end result--what's it like? What is the essential meaning? And I'll repeat this, "What is the essential meaning and understanding that *you* give to the *lived* experience of the Seventh Avenue Streetscape Project?"

[Poet #1]
That I give to it?

[PI] Yes, that you give to it.

[Poet #1]
Oh, okay.

[PI]
But if you, you experienced it, you had the experience.
What would you say you came out with as far as the essential meaning of that *SAS*?

[Poet #1]
Well. I think it's again what we've sort of been flirting with or discussing this whole, you know, this whole sort of interview. All these sorts of questions coming around.

And it's, you know, the idea that art exists beyond the universities beyond, you know, the workshops, beyond the classrooms, that it really is a shared and lived common human experience is sort of the goal of it and to be able to get it out there in a different way.

Charles Simic says, you know, poets or, I'm sorry, *poems* are other people's snapshots in which we recognize ourselves, and that idea of putting art in public spaces where you are reaching different audiences and you're reaching different audiences in a different sort of time. And place as well, where you don't expect to see, you don't expect to engage with art in that way.

You don't expect to read something, and you know, especially in bus stops, which is why I love the idea of poetry in motion on subways, or on elevators, which I've done too, you know, when you're in these sorts of forced public, but also very introspective private spaces at once. I love the idea of giving some, you know, in those little moments of rush in the morning, or in the afternoon, or whenever you're taking that bus to, you know, you're sitting next to someone you don't want to be sitting next to. You're quiet, you're averting your gaze. And you're just focusing on this poem. You can interact with it in a way and go. It becomes this, this sort of moment, to be introspective for a little while in a way that you wouldn't be if you were just staring at your phone, or you know, gazing off into some something else that

it just provides, you know, a little bit of a deepening or some kind of something in which you can recognize yourself in someone else's work.

You know, in reading these poems and reading, you know "Tending Garden," you may think about someone ill who is at home, or gardening yourself, or the loss of someone, or the love of someone or that sort of thing that happens that you have going on in your own stories through someone else's snapshot you might recognize your own stories and I think that's a really nice thing. Just those moments when we don't expect it. We need more of that to have those opportunities in the public setting in the world to sort of reconnect with ourselves and each other in a way that isn't just sort of anger and road rage or disconnected, you know.

[PI]
Yeah. That, that's great. I was when you were listing off the things that we might...when we read the poem. What it might induce in us I thought myself, well, that's funny, because when I would sometimes I'd read some of your poems, and I remember specifically I would say, "Oh, really like how he used that word. That's an unusual way," because the poet's thing comes in, or "God, it's really good line break, there." It's like I completely forgot the content. I just think this is, you know. But you know, we, that's because of the, luckily because of my good training at school when you were one of my teachers. Yeah.

[Poet #1]
Yeah, and that, and that too. That's what I was saying, you know, looking at my poem so large, right to all of those technical things as well.

And you know what a what a nightmare would be if there's one that didn't belong in that, you know, which I've had in books and things like that.

But at that scale, you know. You see it right away and so...

[PI]
Yeah, well, I've even seen Galway Kinnell, a poem I used to use in a textbook that when the new version came out, he actually had changed the order of things. He actually edited that published poem, but that's interesting. Let's see what, what he did so I can figure out why he may have done that. And it was, it was truly better, the edit was better. So, for various reasons for clearing up some things that weren't meant to be confusing on purpose because if he wanted to, he could make it that way.

That's all I have, except oh, yeah, I'm going to I'm going to give you a little addendum to that one: "How did you come to that understanding what you just gave me?"

[Poet #1]
I think just, again, all of those sort of past and ongoing interactions and experiences with public art and poetry and art in general. I mean,

it's the conversations that I have when and the inspiration that I gleaned from, or the you know, visceral reactions that I don't like something when I go to a museum, and I look at art work that way.

But just how important it is to do it, and then how important it is to see, you know, the way art can kind of blind side you in situations like that, you know, where you know, you're not necessarily in the right mood or space, or something, and you can have it the way, you know, a song will catch you, you know, in in in a park, or you know, art will anywhere.

You know, those public art projects. I think the ones that are are good and worthwhile have you, you know, challenge you to interact in a different way at a different time, and I'm forgetting what your question was exactly.

[PI]
Oh, just like, how do you, how did you come to that understanding of the impact? [open hand gesture forward to elicit further response].

[Poet #1]
Yeah, I think just experiencing it myself and over, you know, part of a lifetime of public art and writing myself, you know, you start to recognize it in different places.

[PI]
Yes, same experience. Okay. So we actually got through the whole interview, which is great.

And I am going to save the Transcript.

[13:49:12]
[End Time] 13:52:13

APPENDIX F

POET #2—CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION TRANSCRIPT

Poet #2/Batch 1a
Interview Date: January 10, 2023, 8:30am
Interview Length: 1:37:40

[Start Time] 08:31:02

[PI] 09:46:45
Okay, here's our main interview question. This is it--home stretch--ready to go. And this is very carefully, phenomenologically worded.

What is the essential meaning and understanding that *you* give to the *lived* experience of the Seventh Avenue Streetscape project, essential meaning...understanding that you give to it? [Punctuating "essential" and "understanding" through hand gestures].

[Poet #2]
The project is a fantastic forum for very different populations, for showcasing, showcasing the artist and the the artist and poet pairings, and it's it's a yeah, it's it's a particularly exciting forum for different, different people who may stumble upon, a friend of mine did an interesting lecture at the MFA Program; he's a Flagstaff-based writer, long-time poet compatriot, James Jay is his name, and he, he, his lecture to MFA Candidates here was, "Where do you find poetry?" And people raised their hands and said things like *the New Yorker.*

"Oh, yes, is your poetry in there, too?" You know, like he's, it's his response.

But this particular way of finding a poem is is exciting.

It's a, it's a it's a really. It's a really good way to go about doing it, and I'm I'm I'm it's in hooray for the City of Phoenix for having the resources and to to do it for to do that because in my in my, I like Omaha a lot, don't get me wrong, I I like Omaha, I like. It's got a really vibrant great writer community. It's got a great art scene. My neighborhood's got a fantastic First Friday event, but you wouldn't see that in Omaha, you wouldn't see like it's kind of the the bill, not not not billboards.

But the the ways in which the the Seventh Avenue, you know, the the the kind of public art that's appearing in Omaha is not as exciting.

[PI]
Yes, this Seventh Avenue is a phenomenon [air quotes on final word]. That's, that's why I'm doing it. It's on that object, that object, and what you give that experience.

So, just as a wrap up. Can you give me an example of of that meaning or understanding? Can you give me an example or how you came to that idea of how you see the phenomenon or the object of Seventh Avenue?

[Poet #2]
Well, I guess by comparison, just comparing to what, what are the, what are the kinds of public like the City of Omaha. Now, we've got

a, we've got a strong, you know, Arts Council. We've got strong arts organizations. We've got strong galleries, but to have it come from the city itself, that doesn't happen here. I think I forgot who did it.

[PI]
Hmm.

[Poet #2]
This may not have been a city. Robert Creeley had that was really really interesting. They're permanent. There's, there's Robert Creeley's words in what city is it? Is it in? And his, his words are on these big stone-like pillars.

It's like kind of in the business district. I want to say it's it could could be San Francisco. It could be New York. I don't, I don't remember, but it's you know, there, there's a kind of, the word "civic," is yes, a kind of civic leadership and vision that comes from the Seventh Avenue project.

[PI]
That's yeah. And that's actually on par with how it went.

Because when they only had the art about three years into it, Lebow, the director, said to Kevin, I want to, I want to elevate this. I want to add poets. So poems are looked on as something that does [hand gestures upward] because most public art, let's face it, is visible. It's either a sculptural or two-dimensional. It's one or the other, but that's that's how it is.

. . . . . .

[PI]
So, okay, the final thing is just if you have anything else that you feel you want to add, or any questions you have for me. Anything?

[Poet #2]
I am immensely grateful for for for talking to me about this project. And and I'd love, actually would there be a way for me to see what you do with this?

[PI]
Yes, I graduate. May 8th, so I can. Maybe I'll even send you just a copy of my dissertation if you want.

[Poet #2]
Sweet.
[09:54:03]
[End Time] 10:08:15

APPENDIX G

POET #3—CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION TRANSCRIPT

Poet #3/Batch 1b
Interview Date: January 3, 2023, 9am
Interview Length: 1:18:17

[Start Time] 10:48:18

[PI] 11:47:41
Okay. Okay. Here's the main and final question with a probe in case needed: "What is the essential meaning and understanding that you give to the lived experience of the Seventh Avenue Streetscape Project?" This is *your* giving it, your, the meaning that you give it, your understanding of it by going through that process.

[Poet #3]
Okay, I think that as far as a public art project, what I got, how do I say this in a clever way--a built environment in a, as a, as a public art project, I don't know that I think it ever gets any better.

I think there's a rawness to it. I think you get the writers, there were artists involved, you've got a lot of community to together to do it. There are the fabricators, and then they just take it down to this what I just call a noisy, noisy bus stop, and it's a place where there are real people, and they're actually riding buses.

Now, I lived for a long time in Tempe, and people get on buses, and no, but actually nobody got on buses. There would be buses going by and they'd be mostly empty, but I feel like I, I don't know this because I'm making it up, but it seems to me that people will get on buses that stay on bus stops.

They'd experience it. And it was real, and it didn't apologize for itself. It didn't water itself down. In the early days, they were just real poems.

And...I thought that was really nice. I thought it was kind of as good, pure as it gets.

[PI]
That's a great answer. I love it. How did you come to that?
That's the probe. How did you come to that understanding?
What, what would be an example of how you came to that?

[Poet #3]
Well, I don't know. Maybe I came to it, I have a long association with the Project

[PI]
Right.

[Poet #3]
I I I watched the the the selection process, and there didn't seem to be any "fixing"--what they seem to be doing in the years when I was choosing, and we would choose both art and poetry

[PI]
Yup, one on one side, one on the other.

[Poet #3]
Yeah, but we chose the art we liked, and we chose the poems we liked, and they would be chosen because people genuinely were responding to them. This big panel, big room full of people, and we'd just vote. And it seemed honest.

There was no fixing, it was no, "Here's somebody and they're lined up and they're going to get this thing. They're gonna get it because they were professor of this or they had a big seat at some table."

But it felt real, and then we, you put it all together, you have many people in the community making it, making it happen, and there it is, and then you have the big party, and the party was good and it honored the community, it honored the artists, and it brought, I mean, we all got to read our poem. And it brought people down into the community to look at art, talk about art.

No, I I thought it was, I thought it was splendid.

[PI]
I love this project. That's why I'm doing it.

[End Time] 12:05:53

APPENDIX H

POET #4—CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION TRANSCRIPT

Poet #4/Batch 1b
Interview Date: January 9, 2023, 10:30am
Interview Length: 50:47

[Starting Time] 10:29:23

[PI] 11:04:03
Okay. Here's the main final question, but I do have a probe, I have a probe to probe it out in case you need some help with it.

And this is *extremely* phenomenological. That's all it is. "What is the essential meaning, essential meaning and understanding that *you* personally give to the *lived* experience of the Seventh Avenue Streetscape Project?"

[Poet #4]
Honestly, at this point. It's it's it's a fun memory that there's a reason I kept the like the small one, and then I framed it with the backlight.

So, it's plugged in and on. So it, so you can always see it in the space where it's at. It's, I mean, it's a nice reminder of you know, when I used to, when that was my focus, you know, and my focus is shifted over the years.

So. But it's, you know, it's a nice reminder that something went out that maybe somebody enjoyed so...

[10-second pause]

[PI]
Can you give an example of that--like, well, I think one of the examples is you actually had that little light box made right?

[Poet #4]
Yeah.

[PI]
So you wanted to have a memory of it that was more than just the the poem; you want it to almost look like what was up there in the original form cause that had light behind it, too.

[Poet #4]
Yep, that was the idea.

[PI] 11:05:53
But the...how you came to the understanding that maybe somebody else might be reading it. What would that, how did you see that in your mind's eye?

[Poet #4]
I mean, it's out in public, so somebody might have been waiting at the bus and read it and goes, "Oh, neat!" And moved on with their day, like, who knows? Like, I mean at the time I was substantially more

invested in...hoping that, that someone would read it and remember it and hold it, onto it. And I'm just not in that space anymore where I care...as much. So, so, yeah, it'd be neat if someone read it and liked it.

It'd be neat if maybe somebody remembered that it existed outside of a school project or a dissertation [Laughs].

[PI]
Outside of me, right? I don't count [Laughs].

[Poet #4]
Well, then, the thing is like I I mean, I appreciate and respect archival work like I like, I have a bunch of old things that I've held onto, you know, like a massive amount of books and so, I mean I I respect archiving and holding on to the history of spaces and things and ideas. So, I get that completely, like I love old bookstores so like, so, and libraries and things like that. But for me, that kind of archival stuff is much more personal.

So, caring as much about what other, how it interacted with other people,
I've let that go, so...

. . . . . .

[Poet #4]
Well, that's really, here's the thing though, that one, it's really great, and two, it's something that like, I always, I love about academia, it's it's a space to encourage, and you know, hold on to people's obsessions.

Because that's the only thing that salvages things from a historical perspective, from an archival perspective. Somebody's gotta be really weird about it, you know, and that's, and and I use "weird" like the best possible way, you know.

[PI]
Oh, yeah.

[Poet #4]
So, I mean, especially in like the humanities and the arts, I mean, but I, in fairness, even in a lot of like the sciences, too. Someone's got to be really weird about something that most people don't give a second thought, but that's what holds on to things, connects things historically, advances and just expands human knowledge and awareness. And you know, make sure things aren't lost so...

. . . . . .

[PI]
Oh, good! Well, thank you for being an interviewee. I appreciate it.

[Poet #4]

Now you're welcome. Good luck!

[PI]
Okay. See ya.

[11:07:45]
[End Time] 11:18:46

APPENDIX I

POET #5—CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION TRANSCRIPT

Poet #5/Batch 1b
Interview Date: January 10, 2023, 11am
Interview Length: 1:28:09

[Start Time] 11:01:41

[PI] 12:22:02
Okay, here's my, here's my main dissertation question...which is, "What is the essential meaning and understanding that you give, you give this to your lived experience of the Seventh Avenue Streetscape project?"

So we're looking at essence. You are giving this essential meaning to this phenomenon. It's a phenomenon, basically, that's why they call phenomenology.

[Poet #5]
Okay, yeah, well, I guess it. I think of it as celebration, you know.

It just seemed like a celebratory experience, and, and I still feel like I enjoy it and benefit from it when I see that poem and that artwork, you know, on my, on my fence, and and in a way it's kind of in a public space again because it's where people who drop off UPS packages, that's where they drop them. And you know, anyone who comes to my house for the first time who's a reader or who's curious, you know, has the access to read that it. You know, I'm sure most people don't and just ignore it, and just glance at it, and have no idea that it's anything I wrote.

But yeah, it's just something that, it still makes me happy.

[PI]
That's cool. I like that. I like that. And how did you come to that understanding that you look at it like that?

[Poet #5]
Oh, organically, I think that's just how it, you know, felt to me always

[PI]
I think that's the end of the interview. However, if you have any other things you want to add, or have any questions for me, we can do that now.

[Poet #5]
Well, I am so glad you're doing this project, Nadine, and I really appreciate you, including me. And, yeah, I think it's a great, awesome, awesome, awesome dissertation project.

[PI]
Yeah, I know, I really like it, too!

[12:24:20]

[End Time] 12:29:06

APPENDIX J

POET #6—CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION TRANSCRIPT

Poet #6/Batch 1c
Interview Date: January 16, 2023, 3pm
Interview Length: 2:10:53

[Start Time] 14:59:12

[PI] 16:46:50
Well, this is our final question. It's very phenomenological, so the words are very important in this one. So it's "What is the essential meaning--essential--meaning and understanding that *you* give to the *lived* experience of your Seventh Avenue Streetscape Project?" Because that is my phenomenon that I'm looking at, that is it: You look at an object, so I want your lived experience, and I want the essential meaning that you give to that, that project, that that phenomenon.

What is the essential meaning you give to that phenomenon?

[Poet #6]
Hmm, hmm, the essential meaning. I. It is "essential" in the sense of essential for the poem or for me?

[PI]
For the the actual Seventh Avenue, just Seventh Ave. That whole thing, that whole living, being thing.

[Poet #6]
The whole essential Seventh Street is what's so essential about it for me as I'm experience, as I experience...

[PI]
Meaning, meaning, and/or understanding of it. What do you give it? It's what you give it?

[Poet #6]
Oh, oh, what I did give it. Oh, yeah, yeah, okay, yeah.

[5-second pause]

[Poet #6]
Well, that's interesting. Because this is a gift. It, it is a gift.

It's not all, you know. That's the thing I I mean.

It's not about, I always think that poems are gifts, first of all, I mean in a very, I don't want to be so precious about it, but you know, on the other hand, it can be a gift without making a big deal about it being a gift, but I think it is I think it, when it goes out like that, big and out [hands motion wide, upward, and outward, while vocalizing "whooshing" sound] in the public, it it it's as if almost, if I were [hands grasping at the air for meaning] as I view it as the other.

You know that goes. That's a philosophical thing, too, between the self and the other would be, the other would get this, like almost,

like from the universe, knowing there's a writer behind it blah blah blah!

But the thing is: There it is all in their world. So it is huge, and and I do see it as a gift, not like I'm Santa or something, you know, but that and I'm, you know, I don't claim that, I mean, I'm aware, the actuality of it. But at the same time, if I'm walking down the street, and I'm this other person, this going for the bus, and I see this, it's like, "Oh, oh," this is like, you know, encountering a jasmine flower or this is like encountering "WOW!"

"WOW! Thank you, Universe." [Very animated] You know, more like very, I think it's essential in the sense that it enriches the environment, it, because it is not like a...stone, just a stone bench. It it it has that appeal that it it's it's uplifted from the ordinary.

And yet it's about fitting in with the rest at the same time, but I I do think it's like, I'd be really happy if I lived around there, and and I use mass transit to have that there. I just be, I just think it's

It's [long pause] I'd make my life better. See, I cannot I I don't live there, so it's so I'm trying to project how it would be as I, cause I got removed from it being on campus so much, you know what, I didn't, I wasn't in that area, but I imagined it would have been a real gift, a a treat kind of, and enriched my neighborhood in a way that I believe is healthy.

[PI]
How did you come to that? How did you come to that idea?

[Poet #6]
Well, again. It's it's like--when I was married, and I would look, you get familiar with the person you're married to, and you see them every day, and they, you know, and you relate the same way every day. But once in a while you could, you look at them as if they are their very own person in their very own space, and you see them not having anything to do with you, specifically. But there they are, and they are just a miracle in a way that you're not projecting anything onto them.

You're seeing them like they're as their own person, very clearly, and not with any history or anything like that. It's just there, and you go, "Wow!" It's kind of like that for me.

[PI]
Oh, that's a good example. That's a good example.

It's like it's there it's there it's there, and then all of a sudden it's unique.

It's it's it's it's its own.

[Poet #6]

Yeah, it's its own. Yeah.

[PI]
Yeah, it’s almost like, it’s almost like taking something for granted. And then you don’t. Then you see it.

[Poet #6]
Exactly, yeah, and you see it.

And when that happens, and I I don't, I can't conjure it, you know.

I I would like to be able to. I would like to be able to be in that mode more often because I think we do take each other, I mean a tendency to be, if we're around people and family members, we kind of take them for granted. And really, they’re just so unique, you know.

[PI]
It's sort of, I think that's a human, a human condition.

[Poet #6]
It is. Oh, I do, too.

[PI]
I don't think there's really much you can do about it, I mean, when you start to stay in the moment and always be present, it lasts only so long because the human condition is to not do that. It almost seems like we're pushed forward whether we try to enjoy or not in the moment.

. . . . . .

That's the end, except if you have any other questions for me or anything you'd like to add.

[Poet #6]
Oh, any questions for you!

Was there anything, okay, in your experience with the Seventh Street-- Seventh Avenue--that experience that was radically, ***radically*** [exaggerated vocal emphasis (loud)] different or extremely different from mine, like at opposite ends?

[16:55:10]
[End Time] 17:01:09

APPENDIX K

POET #7—CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION TRANSCRIPT

Poet #7/Batch 1c
Interview Date: December 27, 2022, 1pm
Interview Length: 1:12:17

[Start Time] 13:14:55

[PI] 14:09:36
Yeah, so so here's the main [question]. This is the main thing: "What is the essential meaning and understanding?" You could think about this a little bit. The essential meaning and understanding that you give the lived experience--lived experience--of the Seventh Avenue Streetscape Project. Your lived experience.

[Poet #7]
Yeah. The essential meaning. Yeah. I'll think a second...

[PI]
And understanding. You could think about it. And yeah, and then, like, might probe you on that one--that's it. That's the final

[Poet #7]
Essential meaning. Yeah, got, yeah, I feel like I'm repeating myself.

But I'll just try and say something more. With a little depth.

[PI]
Repetition is fine.

[Poet #7]
Yeah. Okay, yeah. Cause you could, you could, you have the train, you can cut it however you want.

[PI]
Yeah, well, I'm just, I'm going to be looking at them and seeing patterns among the poets.

[Poet #7]
Right, right. That makes sense. Yeah, well, I would say, yeah, the essential meaning.

It's really, it just goes back to the, one of the major, or or what I consider the the ethos of of writing seriously, not not just being a poet. But I I can say the ethos of being a poet is trying to say something on the page that can connect you with other human beings and create a connection and an empathy, and maybe even an understanding that makes individuals feel maybe less isolated in a world that is very difficult and challenging and mysterious.

And so, that's what I think all poetry should do on some level.
And it happens, obviously, when you're reading a book or when you're reading a journal or just an individual poem. But I think the, having that kind of effect is, you know, tenfold--it just multiplies when you have a poem like that set up, really beautifully done, aesthetically pleasing in a public space where people, you know, are

just going about their lives, whether it's going to work, the grocery store, taking a walk, so to try to connect with them on that level.

Such a large platform. I think it does make the world maybe a a more welcoming, more more pleasing, more aesthetically pleasing place, and it shows how poetry can connect human beings together in in ways that I think prose just can't do because of its length and things like that so, anyway, that's a little. That's that's a little answer.

[PI]
That's a great answer.

[Poet #7]
So, okay, yeah, good.

[PI]
Well, I want to know. Can you tell me, well, I think you sort of gave that--I I do have listed, "Can you give me an example of that lived experience?" But maybe this is the last probe which would be, "Can you tell me how you came to that understanding? How did you come to that, that?" Cause that's almost like a little belief system there.

[Poet #7]
Yeah.

[PI]
How did you come into that?

[Poet #7]
Yeah, why, I really have to, yeah, I really would say it just has to do with my mentors and teachers had been teaching me that since, you know, I was an undergrad, and I was 21 years old coming back for Iraq.

I was really learning cause you're suspicious of poetry or any art, maybe, you don't know how effective it is, or how powerful it is, but I've had the experience just as I know as you have, and many poets had, you know, when you're reading a lot, you have those experiences where you'll read a poem from someone and it's like no other experience, and it really can affect you powerfully, and it can just hit you or as people like to say, you know, it really "struck" me, or something like that. So, I I continue to read to have that experience. And so I learned that from my teachers, who always kind of talked about that.

And they talked about how poetry, Muriel Rukeyser talks about this lot.

You know, how poetry should have a function in all societies and cultures, how it brings people together, how it's always, of course, related to song and the the the miraculous human voice, right?

The ability to tell stories and communicate feelings, whether it's poetry, song, drama, whatever.

And I think I. So yeah, so I was learning that as an undergrad definitely learned at grad school and I'm even more convinced of it 20 years later, as I've now basically just been more of a teacher in the last 10 years, so that's where it comes from.

[PI]
So you, you did learn that. Could you give me an example of your own lived experience, of something that has a, where you had that actual experience, that you didn't just hear from a teacher and believe them? But one of the reasons that you believe them is you've experienced it yourself in some way, you have an example of that where you were, you were touched, moved by that.

[Poet #7]
Yeah, I would say, a real concrete example. It's just, you probably know the poem, most people do. It's a poem called "Facing It" by Yusef Komunyakaa.

When I first read that poem, as you know, he's a Vietnam veteran. I read that poem in undergrad, and I I really just understood the surface of it. I understood it was about a man standing at a memorial thinking about his personal, private identity in relation to the State, in relation to what the State had asked them to do in the military. He was also reckoning, of course, with being a black man in America.

And I. You know, I, at that time, I couldn't really fathom a lot of that or understand that deeply. But I think reading that poem once, and then going back to it hundreds of times, and also now teaching it and knowing it so well, it, I'm really, it really--a poem like that, "Facing It" by Komunyakaa really convinces me, it shows me that poetry can speak to these really complicated human feelings, especially the human feelings that come with serving in the military and serving for the State, and it can reckon with that and capture those those complications and paradoxes and and grievances in ways that prose can never do.

And so, yeah, I think that poem shows me that. And I've never read anything that does it that well, so...

[PI]
What did it, when you have this lived experience, you're saying these feelings, can you, can you give me a little more about those? What are they like? What, what's going on?

This is our final question, so I'm going to probe you out on it until I get it.

[Poet #7]
Yeah. I, oh, good. Yeah. No, good. Yeah.

[PI]
I want to be. I want to be standing there, and I want to feel what you're feeling. That's where I'm going with this.

[Poet #7]
Yeah, yeah, I think it, it shows how, you know, you could be sitting in a room reading it from a book or reading it on a page, and you can feel, you can feel awe, you can feel terror. You can feel the maybe the air, that hair go back, go up on the back of your neck because the the the cadence of that speaker, and images that he's giving us, and the the way he's fluctuating his tone between kind of, you know, between grief, between anger, between a kind of apathy where he's trying to let things go. He's trying not to cry.

The way he does it through the language absolutely is transferred to the reader for anyone who reads that poem multiple times and reads it closely. So yeah, I feel the awe, the terror, the grief, the sadness.

But I also feel, there's always something even about, even the worst poems or the poems about the worst experience, the most horrifying experience. There's a triumph in them. And so the way Komunyakaa captures that experience, I think is triumphant because at least for me, and with many other people who read that poem, it makes us feel, as I was saying, less isolated, and it makes us feel like there's an understanding out there that can be communicated and transferred through the written word on the page in a poem that's only, you know, 20 or 30 lines or so, and I think that is miraculous, and I keep reading poetry because I hunger for those experiences, and as you know, most poetry is not going to do that for you, but you will encounter poems that will do it for you. But you have to keep reading to find those experiences

[PI]
Okay, so I'm going to assume here, and I hope not wrongly, that veteran or not, if I read that poem, I would have those experiences you were.

[Poet #7]
Yeah. Sure.

[PI]
It wasn't just verifying your own.

[Poet #7]
No, it was complicating. Yeah, complicating my own. Cause. And also, yeah, giving me knowledge and something that's profound that I I I couldn't understand, like, you know, shining light on a, in a dark room or something like that. Yeah, definitely. So, civilian or veteran, yeah.

[PI]
Okay, so yeah, cause I want to enter that world when I'm talking to you.

What I want to do now is I want to make sure I have all this down before you leave; I'm going to save the transcript. The transcript says it's saved.

[Poet #7]
Okay. Okay.

[End Time] 14:18:41

APPENDIX L

POET #8—CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION TRANSCRIPT

Poet #8/Batch 2
Interview Date: January 13, 2023, 10am
Interview Length: 48:46

[Start Time] 10:01:13

[PI][10:40:45]
Okay, this is our final/main question. This is my dissertation question.
It's phenomenological, so listen to the keywords, and then give me your answer.

"What is the essential, essential meaning and understanding that you give to the lived experience, your lived experience of the Seventh Avenue Streetscape Project?"

[Poet #8]
What's the essential meaning that I give to my lived experience of the Seventeenth [Seventh] Avenue project?

So like the the meaning that I assign to it? Is that right?

[PI]
Yes. And if you may, you may even have an example of that lived experience of how you, how you came to that, came to that understanding.

[Poet #8]
Good question. I think that if I had a my first to stab at this is that, and I'll pick the the experience of having like a stranger.
DM me on Instagram, or like they posted a picture of the, of my panel and like tagged me in it, and then we had a short, you know, we exchanged back and forth that she liked the poem, and we talked a little bit.

So I think that it's affirming and really showing that, that poetry especially can kind of or can transcend like our connections, like it, it can connect people who have no connection, basically, who can and can bring conversation about and can make, you know, daily life more meaningful, and I think that that's something that I mean, I believe, as a writer, anyway, that there's value in these words, that it means something, that there's some reason I'm doing this.

I think, having it affirmed in such a kind of concrete way, that allowed strangers to find it, see it, and can find me, was really remarkable, and I haven't had that experience before this or since in the same way.

[PI]
Yeah, I'm just, I want, I want to tag on to one thing that you said: if it's more "meaningful," that in their daily life, what the, what does that mean? Like how is that?

[Poet #8]

Well, the the girl in particular. She like, I think she like rode her bike by those billboards, like on her way to work or school or something like on a daily or weekly basis, and so, instead of it just being, oh, if it was like a billboard for an ad for something that no one needs, that's one thing, and then, if it's, it's a beautiful piece of art with words on it, that's it's still better than an ad. But then, when she made the, she took the time to stop and read it, see my name, find me on Instagram.

We had a conversation, that's even more, more meaning than you know from it being an ad, to it being pretty, to it being like a poem and a thing by someone she kind of knows now that we have a connection, that we've had a conversation. I think that's what I mean.

Like it, it makes, deepens the connection--each layer, so like what, when like cities do projects that are beautifying, I think that, even that on its own, makes life better.

But then allowing people to connect with other citizens, you know, other people live in like the same general area can be, make it even more special.

[PI]
I think that's really cool that that happened to you.

That's really, really nice. Well, we made it. Actually, the original time is supposed to be 45 minutes.

We did it in time for your husband to use the computer.

[End Time} 10:48:31

APPENDIX M

POET #9—CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION TRANSCRIPT

Poet #9/Batch2
Interview Date: December 30, 2022, 1pm
Interview Length: 2:34:31

[Start Time] 13:03:35

[PI] 15:04:13
Okay, final question. And evidently, it's still recording; it didn't lock us out, so we might as well go for it.

[Poet #9]
Okay, great.

[PI]
Okay, this, is like the main thing. And I do have a probe in case.

[Poet #9]
Okay.

[PI]
What is the *essential* meaning and *understanding* that you give to the *lived* experience of the Seventh Avenue Streetscape project?

What is the, this essential meaning and understanding that you give the lived experience of the Seventh?

[Poet #9]
Essential meaning.

[PI]
And this is you, your lived experience. And yeah, and then I have like two probes on it. So if you have, if you have a little bit of a problem, I can give it to you now.

[Poet #9]
No, it's okay.

<BREAK> [4 minutes]

[Poet #9]
I I think I can sort of rephrase it.

[PI]
Okay.

[Poet #9}
So it was like, "What is the essential meaning of the Seventh Avenue Streetscape in terms of *my* lived experience?"

[PI]
Your lived, *your* lived experience, your mean--essential meaning and understanding that you *give*, that you give, yeah, to the lived experience.

[Poet #9]
That I ascribe to it.

[PI]
Yeah, so there's no wrong answer, and it'll be very, you know, it might be the same or different from everybody else.

[Poet #9]
For sure, so that is, so is the question: "What is the meaning that is ascribed to the Streetscape for or within my lived experience or that I ascribe to it in like a larger context as like a public art project or like

[PI]
It can be anyway that you see it because it's your experience.

[Poet #9]
Yeah, for sure. Okay.

[PI]
Some people may never, people might never see the forest from the trees, I mean, they just might see their own thing, and/or they might see both.

[Poet #9]
Yeah, I mean, I think I guess, like essentially, I mean, I think I see the Seventh Avenue Streetscape, as like a, an attempt towards something, you know, it was an attempt to create a kind of artistic or cultural space within the City in a public way that engaged people. I think that attempt was sort of successful in some ways and could it perhaps been expanded upon in others, you know.

It certainly engaged me as a writer, and like certainly, you know, we lay a baseline of just like getting money to folks who are doing creative work and like I mean that's a pretty good measure of success.

Like, if that's all you're able to do in the city, you know, sort of metaphorically, figuratively, the City Phoenix, but any city, that's great, but it's also like so limited, right? It's, I think it's kind of a sad fact of this country, sometimes, you know, it's like that's the best that the city, as an official entity, right, I mean this is not an exaggeration or kind of a a metaphor, it's like it is the administration of the city, right, that is doing this, and certainly there might be other ways we interpret the city, you know, and sort of the sense of people or whatever, but, like you know, the best the city can do is just give some people money every once in a while, but it's like that's so, like that's not what we want.

You know, it's like as I think people, or maybe like we need it, right?

But I don't, I mean, maybe some of us want it, I'm not sure, but like I would guess, I would say like personally as a writer, like that's not what I want. It's nice. It certainly is motivating, and it gives

me an incentive to engage. It provides me with a way where I can be like, I can justify spending the time on this, but like what I really want, like what we really want is to be in community with each other. To be, you know, in relationship with each other, and to build relationships because, you know, we don't have them as as a city, right?

We, it's a constant project, and there is certainly a question of whether the city can or should be the entity that is responsible for that, and I certainly think it isn't, right? I mean people are responsible for their own lives.

But like, certainly I would love to live in a city, or a state, or a country that, you know, cared more, right, that sort of supported things and that that built community or tried to, and I think that Phoenix tried to, I think it tries to, but I think it's sort of, you know, these things often...I don't want to say fall short, I think that's not fair to any of the projects, but like everything in this country is so temporary, you know, and so like short-term and shortsighted a lot of times, you know.

And so like, you know, we do a thing, and I think it like looks good, and it sort of feels good for a second, and then it kind of goes away.

And I just think that's kind of unfortunate.

You know, that's the way that things work, or that you know we don't, for whatever reason, have the capacity or resources to, you know, create more meaning out of these occasions, you know, I mean that's the whole idea of this piece was like let's have and it's I mean, I really again this is not I'd hope this is not sort of negative or overly critical, right?

[PI]
No, no. I actually, I'm I'm finding this fascinating, actually.

I don't want to, I don't want to taint what you're saying by saying "I just find it fascinating."

I really really like like this viewpoint

[Poet #9]
Yeah, I just, I think it's like, yeah, I mean, we could just...the whole idea, or the whole intention was to like create meaning.

But I think, you know, there's just so few opportunities for *any* meaning in public life in what we do.

And if we're talking about the physical space of the city, if we're talking about sort of how we gather, you know, so much of it is kind of transactional and impersonal, and not really centered around relationships, and and kind of like feelings of belonging or building power for people. And I think that those, there are lots of people

doing that in Phoenix, you know, and I think that those those things do happen. But you know, I think they happen in spite of or against or outside of these larger structures, and so I think it's just kind of like, I think the imagination of the country is so impoverished, you know, I think people's imaginations are impoverished, you know, because of the so few of us even think that, you know, art or culture or writing can be something that we do, you know, not even in the sense of a profession or being paid for, but even just as an individual, you know so few of us have the privilege to be able to engage in that meaning making and so it's like no wonder, then that when you have this many people and you have one office in a city, and then it just comes down to people, you know.

I mean, Estrella and Rosemary made that happen; it's great, and they got lots of other things going on, you know, and like the people who are in power, you know, they don't really think about things in this way, and maybe they don't have to.

But you know, I think, you know, if we are talking about kind of trying to build something, you know, like it takes a lot of work to build a city and a community, and to have a healthy city, you know, and like, I don't I mean, maybe such a thing is not even possible.

Who knows, so yeah, I think that there's like, I mean, I really appreciated that opportunity.

I think it was more significant to me than I realized before this interview, you know, I haven't thought, I've always had that poem, and I was like "Oh, I like that," and that was cool, but you know, I don't
think I understood how it sort of fit into the larger narrative or my larger development as a as a quote/unquote, you know, practicing writer, or whatever.

But you, know, I I think about it compared to say like, well, I don't know if that's fair, yeah, I don't know...

[PI]
Yeah, if you can give me an example--an example of that lived experience, or how you came to that understanding, how/what would you, if you, you know, how do you, what what made you see it that way?

[Poet #9]
I guess I just, I mean, I think about it a lot.

And Phoenix is like a big, colonized city.

You know, I mean, it's like it's relatively recent you know, as far as cities go. I has its own unique history of development compared to others and you know, there was a lot of really early displacement, and ongoing displacement of people and communities who live there and you know, I remember kind of coming into Phoenix and everybody's like, "Oh, you know, like nobody is from here," and like, "Are you, you

know, a Phoenix Native?" And I hear like people say the term "native" now, and I'm like unless you're referring to somebody who's, you know, a member of a sovereign nation or like a tribe, like you, that's, maybe you should find a different term for that cause like there are so many, you know, indigenous folks in Phoenix, right, but like that, where is that narrative in the city, you know, where is that street corner, I mean, and there are that, there is that stuff for sure, I mean, that's I'm, I think perhaps going a little more than I need to, there's plenty around, but...

[PI]
Yeah, it's interesting about, it's interesting what you were saying about the connection because I was thinking of something even just today.
And even something they could have done to make more of a connection, an extended connection.

. . . . . .

[Poet #9]
Yeah, no, I mean, I think the development in Phoenix is a real challenge.

You know, and certainly, I mean, you know, we left, we had reasons for that, you know, and other opportunities, but like certainly, the way that downtown Phoenix has developed is hard for people who have been here and seen what has come before it, you know, but I think, you know the, I guess the question that I would have for the Streetscape, or for the Arts and Culture is like because it is a question of people's desire, right, and their being in the world, and so like if we are not trying to sort of push people towards a deeper meaning in their lives and in the city, and to sort of have more awareness or perhaps consciousness of how we're moving through this space or what it means to us like then I I'm not sure, I guess, then, there are, that is one thing that Arts and Culture I think can do within, you know, an urban space, and I think it's there, the urban space is really challenging, right. There are lots of opportunities that it opens up because it brings all these people together, and . . . but then there's there's a lot of, there's a lot that comes with that that has to be negotiated and yeah, it's a, it's a, I think Phoenix in general is a very challenging place.

You know, not in a negative way, like, but you know, you sort of, you know, "It's growing" I guess is maybe the term for it, I don't know.

So yeah, it's a, I think it's, so I like, I think that the Streetscape is like I don't know, I mean, my question is sort of "How do you measure impacts?"

You know, that's like an apt question. It's like "What is the impact of this project?" and you know, "What are people doing?" And I think a lot about this with you know, say, my work at Piper, or the work at Four Chambers, and kind of like, yeah, I don't know.

[PI]
It sounds like the lived experience that you want is not just yourself, but you want that community aspect of it, that connection with people.

[Poet #9]
Yeah, for sure. Totally, yeah, I would say that, I mean, I think the the Streetscape had an impact, I think it had an impact on me as a writer that I didn't necessarily realize or was able to articulate necessarily prior to this interview.

Did it have an impact, how did it impact the other people, you know, that's kind of, I guess, my question is like "What is the impact of it?" cause like people spend a lot of time on that, you know, and it's like...

[PI]
And they don't do exit surveys. They haven't done anything like that with the neighborhood, no feedback whatsoever, except anecdotal.

[Poet #9]
Well, and this is, I think, again, those questions of like capacity and sort of knowledge, you know, and like, but yeah, I mean, I guess I would just sort of, you know, if we're not, if we're really trying to like serve or help people, you know, it's like the, I guess there's questions of like "What is the impact we're going for?" And you know, I think like like, I think it was a good thing.

I just think it's sort of all...I don't know. Yeah, I can, I can kind of get a little pessimistic, perhaps about the city or the United States. So I think it was like a, I think it was like good for what they were able to do with it.

I think that it would have been, it would be nice if they could have done more or thought about it more, but this is also kind of the, you know, the situation we're in and like we all have our own lives to lead, and people will lead those lives, regardless of whether the city, you know, offers an opportunity to a few folks for some money like, you know.

I I think it's just like, and I think the city does a lot for arts and culture, like I should be pretty clear about that, especially having worked there, like I think and being in a new city now or new town, and like I think the the current Office of Arts and Culture does like so much, right, and and does really go to work, but again, there are these costs of being in a system and sort of like what are you able to do and how much time do you have, and what else is coming in, and you know, the as you were saying, too, the pressures, people getting burned out in those positions. So it's like it's challenging, for sure.

[15:25:54]
[End Time] 15:33:42

APPENDIX N

POET #10—CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION TRANSCRIPT

Poet #10/Batch 2
Interview Date: January 5, 2023, 1pm
Interview Length: 1:20:45

[Start Time] 13:01:54

[PI] 14:01:17
So, okay, this is the final main question. It is a phenomenological question. There is a probe at the end in case we can't get it far enough.

But what is the essential meaning and understanding that *you* give to the *lived* experience of the Seventh Avenue Streetscape Project?

[Poet #10]
So read that again. Let me just think about...

[PI]
Okay, yeah, few keywords in here. What is the essential meaning and understanding that you give to the lived experience of the Seventh Avenue Streetscape project? As a poet, of course.

[Poet #10]
So when Shelley talks about poets being unacknowledged legislators, I I sort of hope that people will, who see that poem might think on their own lives, and clutter, and the connections, the sentimental connections we have to objects in their own lives; they don't have to throw everything away because of me, though, I'm not a Marie. What's her name?

[PI]
Oh, yeah. Marie. Hondo [Correction: Kondo].

[Poet #10]
Yeah, I don't. I don't believe in that.

[Poet #10]
So. But I do think wise consideration of what we have is important...

. . . . . .

[14:02:34]
[End Time] 14:22:01