

# CURATORIAL SESSION: READER—IN-QUIRIES INTO CURATORIAL PRACTICE

## 05.09: QUESTIONS

**HAND IN HAND** with the claim that art can be socially useful, is there a danger of it becoming instrumentalised and/or 'diluted' within a wider social or political agenda? How complicit is the curator in this process and what strategies might they employ to counter the potential instrumentalisation of curatorial practice? **Liz Burns (Curator)**

**DOES THE CURATOR** occupy similar creative terrain as that of the film director? **Helen Carey (Curator)**

**WHAT CHALLENGES** face the independent curator when working within a contemporary art organisation or institution? How do these challenges impact on the curator's power to realise their projects and resist becoming institutionalised? **Louise Cherry (Artist)**

**IN THE CURRENT** trend of large-scale exhibitions which deal with the issues of colonialism, xenophobia, and globalisation, is the curator comfortable in the role of public intellectual? And how much does he/she rely on input from the non-art public to adequately represent their chosen exhibition subject? **Caroline Cowley (Curator)**

**IN THE FORTHCOMING** decade with a decrease in mobility a predictable outcome of global economic recession and higher air travel costs, will we see the number of biennials and large-scale city specific exhibitions diminish? Will they occur less often as in the case of Sculpture Projects Muenster? **Cleo Fagan (Curator)**

**TO WHAT EXTENT** is clarity of concept important in a 'subjectivity-driven method of curating' and how effective can this method be in activating and articulating new ways of seeing or experiencing? **Fiona Fullam (Artist)**

**IS IT NECESSARY** for curators to consider the local context of an international art event when a large portion of the audience experience the event via the internet? **Ben Geoghegan (Artist)**

**WHAT MODE OF** biennale would be best suited to Dublin? **Jennie Guy (Artist)**

**IS THE DEVELOPMENT** of alternative platforms in which contemporary art is encountered an effective way to trigger a 'constructive ponder' in the viewer? **Russell Hart (Artist)**

**HOW IMPORTANT IS** it for the curator, in showing film and video in the gallery space/ context and in order to captivate the audience, to create a balance between subjective and objective spaces and in turn do justice to the space and the work? **Sarah Hurl (Artist)**

**HARALD SZEEMANN REFERRED** to his evolving curatorial practice as the continuous, creation of his 'Palais Ideal'. Is it possible for the exhibition space to convey the metaphysical in the form of a constructed, temporary world unrelated to society? What are the social, artistic and curatorial legacies of these worlds and what purpose do they serve for the curator, artist and audience if any? In the present climate, are curators under pressure to reflect broad socio-political concerns over those which are individual and subjective? **Elaine Hurley (Artist)**

**DOES THE CURATOR BECOME** a selective cultural anthropologist in attempts to preserve the expression of distinct individual cultures at a time of dislocation, deracination and migration? **Vanessa Marsh (Artist)**

**TO WHAT EXTENT** is a conscious suspension of disbelief a necessary pre-condition for the spectator to read an exhibition? Do we trade on suspending our disbelief by becoming a willing viewer to the unexpected? **Denise McDonagh (Artist)**

**CAN THE TERM** 'destroy-in-order-to-remake' be considered as a current curatorial methodology within contemporary art institutions? **Kitty Rogers (Artist)**

**IF GIVEN A** carte blanche, would the preferred means for curators to realise exhibitions be through the artist/curator collaborative model or as an autonomous curator? Is the possibility of conflicting interests ever a cause for concern in collaboration? **Linda Shevlin (Artist)**

**DOES THE INTERVENTION** between artwork and viewer, through the educative attempts of museums, mediated and staged by curators or re-enacted or reintroduced in new ways by other artists, help or hinder the viewers' experience of the actual or original artwork? **Barbora Svecova (Artist)**

**IN THIS COMMUNICATION** age the media plays an important role in the life of an exhibition and, in many cases, it is a simple and effective tool to publicise an event. However, if this relationship backfires can the situation be managed? When dealing with a controversial subject can the work and its context be sure to get a fair airing? **Suzannah Vaughan (Artist)**

# TESSA GIBLIN

Curatorial Seminar Module Leader MAVIS and  
Curator of Visual Arts, Project Arts Centre

A question is the staging-point for various forms of enquiry: a question can be a proposition, a provocation, a request, and an introduction to a conversation - the MAVIS students have been asked to stage their enquiry in this publication, to provoke discussion and to gain further insight in to the variety of approaches that we witness in almost every exhibition of contemporary and modern art.

Researching exhibitions ranging in date from 1969 to 2008, the MAVIS students encountered a variety of curatorial platforms and agendas, national and political contexts, and approaches to the exhibition experience. The students were learning in order to teach, researching exhibitions which were then taught back to their colleagues, which finally merged into these personally motivated queries about the practice and realisation of contemporary curating.

# AMANDA RALPH

Programme Co-ordinator MAVIS

■ *And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,  
That one small head could carry all he knew.*<sup>1</sup>

Oliver Goldsmith's gently mocking, but affectionate portrayal of a village schoolmaster as a bombastic transmitter of knowledge, striking fear and awe into his students in equal measure, makes us wonder if pedagogy has, since the eighteenth-century changed at all.

■ An education 'suffering from narration sickness' where the teacher's 'task is to "fill" the students with the contents of his narration . . . words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated, and alienating verbosity'<sup>2</sup> is Paulo Freire's description of the banking model of education, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor, echoes the literary caricature above.

■ In the modern university, the notion that the 'learned professions' are constituted through rigorous problem solving, resourced through a substantive field of knowledge, both promotes a narrow epistemology of practice and reinforces the student-as-receptacle model of education.

■ Yet practice is not concerned with fixed or given problems but operates in unfolding and evolving situations of 'uncertainty, instability,

uniqueness, and value conflict.'<sup>3</sup> These are situations where the practitioner takes on the role of a 'researcher' whose task is to not to find the solution, but rather to identify the question.

■ This publication forms part of the ongoing process of inquiry involving the teacher, the exhibition-makers and the students. Rancière uses an analogy describing the learning involved in the child's development of language, where 'someone has addressed words to them . . . that they want to respond to, not as students or as learned men, but as people; in the way you respond to someone speaking to you and not to someone examining you.'<sup>4</sup> This he describes as the practice of equality.

1 Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village".  
Lonsdale, Roger, ed. The New Oxford Book  
of Eighteenth-Century Verse. Oxford and New  
York: Oxford University Press, 1989, 1990.

2 Paulo Freire. The Pedagogy of The Oppressed.  
London: Penguin Books, 1970, 1993.

3 Donald, A. Schön. The Reflective  
Practitioner. USA: Basic Books, 1983.

4 Jacques Rancière. The Ignorant Schoolmaster.  
California: Stanford University Press, 1991.

HAND IN HAND with the claim that art can be socially useful, is there a danger of it becoming instrumentalised and/or 'diluted' within a wider social or political agenda? How complicit is the curator in this process and what strategies might they employ to counter the potential instrumentalisation of curatorial practice?

## LIZ BURNS CURATOR

IN THE PAST TEN YEARS there has been a marked increase in opportunities for artists and curators to develop art projects in the public realm, largely through regeneration programmes and the Per Cent for Art Schemes. One of the justifications for money being spent on art by these programmes is that they strive to make art more accessible to the general public, attract new and diverse audiences and subsequently contribute to the social and cultural regeneration of an area.

The recently announced public art strategy for the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) for the London 2012 Olympics states very clearly that it aims to 'Create a new sense of place and belonging for local communities, attract new businesses and residents to the area and contribute to the social and cultural regeneration of the area.'<sup>1</sup>

An ongoing concern of arts commissioning within these structures is the potential instrumentalisation of art within the larger

social and economic agendas of such funding bodies. There is an ongoing tension between the perceived autonomy of art and the expectation that it be put to a particular use, be it in attracting new and diverse new publics, working with targeted 'communities' or contributing to the social and cultural regeneration and often subsequent gentrification of an area.

What role does the curator play in such a context as the commissioner and oftentimes the essential mediator between such funding bodies, the invited artist, and diverse 'publics'? How complicit is the curator in this process? What strategies might a curator employ to counter the potential instrumentalisation of curatorial practice within such a context?

<sup>1</sup> Alberto Duman 'Public Art u need', Breaking Ground Research Papers, Feb 2008.

## Does the Curator occupy similar creative terrain as that of the film director?

### HELEN CAREY CURATOR

THE NOUVELLE VAGUE of French film in the 1950s highlighted the film director as a source of original creative expression. The transformation was embodied in the work of 'auteur' directors Truffaut, Godard and Chabrol, where the director is placed on the same creative level as the author. Jens Hoffmann, in his article 'A Certain Tendency of Curating' argues that this claim for directors is paralleled in those now made around the curator as creator or originator, within 'the practice and conditions of recent exhibition making'.<sup>1</sup> Referencing Truffaut and Barthes<sup>2</sup> as well as Michel Foucault,<sup>3</sup> Hoffmann considers the creative act as 'the transformation of chaos into order or in other words the act of selecting against an infinite number of possibilities [...] someone who limits, excludes, creates meaning with existing signs, codes and materials.'<sup>4</sup> This is a recent understanding of the activity of curation, moving away from the idea of the curator as facilitator, manager, or administrator, and underlines the usefulness of the Nouvelle Vague analogy. Hoffmann's other question which poses 'where to from here' might also find the terrain of Nouvelle Vague interesting.

The history of *Voyage(s) en Utopie (Travels in Utopia)* at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2006, begins in 2003 with the idea of a retrospective of the films of one of the central figures of the Nouvelle Vague, Jean Luc Godard.

Discussions around the planning took place between Dominique Paini, Curator and the then Head of the Cinemathèque Française at the Centre Pompidou, and Jean Luc Godard, in Switzerland, evolved ideas of the project to become more of a state-of-cinematic-nation statement by Godard in exhibition/installation form and proposing 9 rooms to represent the Collage(s) de France, and the history of cinema. Surpassing the original budget allocation, changing the exhibition concept and the unfolding drama between artist and original curator, as well as the shifting understanding of the role of the institution, gives rise to questions around the origins and subsequent shape of the idea and roles. In the end the final exhibition was described as curated by Jean Luc Godard himself and comprised of three sections; Avant Hier, Hier, Aujourd'hui (The Day before Yesterday, Yesterday, Today). In the apparent chaos of the exhibition's vocabulary, Godard outlined his own influences in fine art and film in Avant Hier and Hier alongside the maquette of his earlier conception of the exhibition, moving through to Aujourd'hui, dealing with excesses, individualism, fetishisms and transience. In the final exhibition *Voyage(s) en Utopie* Godard gave no analysis of his installation or methodology.

Bearing this in mind and considering Hoffmann's argument and his 'where to from here' question for curators, the following ques-

# WHAT CHALLENGES FACE the independent curator when working within a contemporary art organisation or institution? How do these challenges impact on the curator's power to realise their projects and resist becoming institutionalised?

**LOUISE CHERRY**  
ARTIST

In her essay 'Resisting Institutionalism' Emily Pethick states that '[...] Casco' is not conceived of as a gallery but as an open space, where many different kinds of activities and forms of work can happen both inside and outside the space—each changing the organisation and lending it a different character.<sup>2</sup>

Casco was developed as a centre for experimental art aiming to develop a critical platform to explore art in the public realm, questioning the relation between art and its physical, social and political environment.<sup>3</sup> Within this situation experimental curating, understood as stretching the possibilities of exhibiting, performing, interacting or relating to an audience, is encouraged. Interdisciplinary practice plays a large role as the organisation aims to explore cross-fertilization, shared concepts, critical discourse as well as relationships between theory and practice. Casco is but one example of a contemporary art institution whose emphasis lies in discourse and exchange

rather than presentation of art and where the aim is to work with emerging rather than established artists who do not already have links to other major art institutions. Other such organisations (among many) that also strive to follow this model include the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the Institute of Contemporary Art in London and PS1 in New York.

However, J.J Charlesworth in his essay 'Not about institutions, but why we are so unsure of them', challenges the role of these contemporary institutions and identifies the institutional character of the curator's 'power':

[...] one paradoxical aspect of the debate over alternative definitions of what can go on in an art gallery, or 'art space', is that such alternatives inevitably return to being 'presentations', however much they attempt to redefine the relation between work and public away from presentation and spectatorship. 'Presentation', it could

be argued, isn't about a relationship produced between people and certain types of artwork, but is rather a type of relationship between people and an institution, produced in largest part, by the institution itself.

So the question centres on the challenges facing the independent curator when working within the framework of a contemporary art organisation or institution. Can the institutional framework and the curator's power live side by side, allowing the curator to realise their projects and resist institutionalisation? Or is the curator's vision subsumed by that most generic of categories, the institution?

1 Casco, Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht, The Netherlands, was founded in 1990.

2 Emily Pethick, 'Resisting Institutionalism' in *Nought to Sixty*, issue 4, August 2008, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London.

3 Casco –<http://www.cascopejects.org/> (accessed 06/10/08) 4 J.J Charlesworth, 'Not about institutions, but why we are so unsure of them' in *Nought to Sixty*, issue 4, August 2008, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London.

tions arise: Do the conditions and practice of exhibition making provide any insight into the idea of the curator as author and the 'where to from here' for contemporary curators? What are the implications for curation when an artist curates his/her own work?

1 Jens Hoffmann, 'A Certain Tendency of Curating' in *Curating Subjects* ed. Paul O'Neill, Open Edition, London, 2008, pp. 137-142.

2 Truffaut's Essay 'A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema', 1954, referenced Roland Barthes 'The Death of the Author' in Stephen Heath (ed), *Images, Music, Text*, Hill, New York, 1977

3 Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in Donald F. Bouchard (ed), *Language, Counter-Memory Practice*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1977.

4 Jens Hoffmann, 'A Certain Tendency of Curating' in *Curating Subjects* ed. Paul O'Neill, Open Edition, London, 2008, pp. 137-142.

IN THE CURRENT TREND of large-scale exhibitions which deal with the issues of colonialism, xenophobia, and globalisation, is the curator comfortable in the role of public intellectual? And how much does he/she rely on input from the non-art public to adequately represent their chosen exhibition subject?

## CAROLINE COWLEY CURATOR

*“True art is unable not to be revolutionary, not to aspire to a complete and radical reconstruction of society”<sup>1</sup>*

Looking at exhibitions such as *Minority Report*, *Rethinking Nordic Colonialism*, *Democracy When? – Activist Strategizing in LA*, *Documenta 11* and *Manifesta 6*<sup>2</sup>, the participants and curators attempt to address hard hitting issues argued out daily by politicians. Within these exhibitions debate is taking the place of artwork, imposing a different responsibility on curators. The inclusion of a cross-section of disciplines and the non-art public within the exhibition programme requires the curator to have an in-depth knowledge of political and societal issues, changing their position to public intellectual. Maria Hlavajova in an interview for *Documenta* magazine describes how her critical art organization BAK, in Utrecht, addresses what she calls *‘the urgencies’*<sup>3</sup> in the contemporary world. Hlavajova acknowledges the parallel between art and politics and as a curator is always questioning arts place among the issues of war, immigration and identity and

is careful to state that careless presentation of such themes could fall into *‘embedded political activism’* and speaks of how each exhibition starts with a well-researched *‘concern.’*<sup>4</sup>

Tone Olaf Nielsen’s exhibition *Democracy When? Activist Strategizing in Los Angeles* was seen as innovative as the curator co-curated the exhibition with a variety of participants which she termed the non-art public, the participants consisted of local resistance and self-organized community groups. The inclusion of these participants in the art institution provoked questions on how this qualified as an exhibition.<sup>5</sup> Nielson, on her arrival to L.A was struck by the number of activist groups and felt that it was not a symptom of a healthy democracy. By selecting and associating these groups in the context of an exhibition she provided a platform for many voices to be heard. The curatorial statement for *Minority Report—Challenging Intolerance in Contemporary Denmark* stated that the aim of the exhibition was to deprogramme ethnic intolerance in Denmark. The curatorial team for this show was advised by various city council and multi-

cultural agencies on what issues and minorities and majorities to include as part of the exhibition so that all viewpoints were addressed.

When the curator wishes to adequately represent subjects beyond art and art practices, as a public intellectual he/she must rely on information from other sources, on topics, which are perhaps outside his/her comfort zone. The benefits within these large-scale exhibitions is that with inclusion of participants not directly involved in artistic production is the potential to mobilize and empower groups to have a voice to lobby for change and the exchange of information which is beneficial to both the curator and the wide variety of groups they cross over with.

1 Anton Vidolke, ‘Exhibition as School in a divided City’, [www.manifesta.org/manifesta6](http://www.manifesta.org/manifesta6) (accessed 25/8/08)

2 *Minority Report- Challenging Intolerance in Contemporary Denmark*, Aarhus Festival of Contemporary Art, 2004. Co-Curated by Trine Rytter Anderson, Kirsten Dufour, Tone Olaf Nielsen & Anja Raitel in collaboration with participants. An interdisciplinary exhibition located at different sites in the city which considered themes of fear and immigration policies in the context of Danish recent centre right politics. The exhibition was devised to provide a platform for debate for a large cross section of politicians, community groups and resource agencies in Aarhus.

Re – thinking Nordic Colonialism, 2006, curated by Kuratorisk Aktion for the Nordic Institute of Contemporary Art, was a multifaceted exhibition dealing with the colonial history of the Nordic countries with took place in sites in Finland, Iceland, Greenland, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Oslo, Stockholm, Norway & Finland. The show brought together 56 artists, politicians and activists which

engaged in a series of debates and happenings on the theme of xenophobia and nationalism with an ongoing after forward led by the curators.

*Democracy When? Activist Strategizing in Los Angeles*, 2002, curated by Tone Olaf Nielsen and participants. It was a thesis exhibition for the Master of Arts in Critical & Curatorial studies, in conjunction with the UCLA Hammer Museum & LA Contemporary Exhibitions. The show looked at the prevalence of self-organized activist and resistance groups in the context of a ‘Healthy Democracy’ again providing a platform for debate with the non-art-public.

*Documenta 11*, 2002, directed by Okwui Enwezor was also multidisciplinary and multi-sited with five platforms realized across 4 continents and emphasized the notion of an exhibition as a discursive platform to argue the possibilities of art & politics across the world. Sites included The India Habitat Centre, New Dehli and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa.

*Manifesta 6*, curated by Mai Abu ElDahab & Anton Vidolke was conceived as an art school to question and challenge the methods of a contemporary art institution. The chosen site for the school was Nicosia, a divided city, the curators felt that this place was a suitable site to open up discussion between the city and the Biennial. The project was halted and the curators did not want to compromise the presentation of their idea and so it remains one.

3 A conversation with Maria Hlavajova by Andrea Wiarda, <http://www.magazines.documenta.de> (accessed 30/9/08)

4 Ibid.

5 Tone Olaf Nielsen’s practice involves collaborating with what she calls the ‘non-art Public’, when working with local resistance groups such as Coalition against Police Abuse/Communities in support of Gang Truce in LA and in *Minority Report* she included Alt for Damerne- A multi-ethnic women’s association which works to help immigrant women adjust to Danish life who struggle to be recognized as an integration association.

# CLEO FAGAN

## CURATOR

IN THE FORTHCOMING decade with a decrease in mobility a predictable outcome of global economic recession and higher air travel costs will we see the number of biennials and large scale city specific exhibitions diminish? Will they occur less often as in the case of Sculpture Projects Muenster?

Pawel Althamer, Path, 2007, Sculpture Projects Muenster 2007. Image courtesy Roman Ostojic / artdoc.de

THE INFLUENCE OF the cultural tourism industry is apparent in the rapid increased number of context-specific international exhibitions (often biennials) since the mid 1990s.<sup>1</sup> They emerged within the conditions of globalisation and, now too, their fate is linked to the globalised economy. With the changing economic climate and increased air travel costs their international audience may be less affluent and therefore less able to travel than before.

Will the quality of these large scale art events increase further as the stakes grow higher in attracting an international audience? Will we see an increase in traveling exhibitions (the mountain going to Mohammed)? Will we see cities sharing a nomadic biennial? Will cultural tourism simply recede on the agenda and if so how will civic funders respond?

In 2005 Charles Esche commented that biennials were the most prevalent source of experimentation and risk-taking in terms of exhibitions whilst museums on the other hand have been modeling themselves on private corporations. In considering what the biennial has to offer he said *'the real way to test whether the biennial serves a social function within the public sphere was to deepen the distinction between it and the art museum'*.<sup>2</sup> He stated that a definition of the biennial as *'synchronic, immediate and spectacular and the museum as diachronic, reflexive and intimate'*,<sup>3</sup> may restrict possibilities but may be a starting point for a dialogue that could lead to new biennial models. Referring to a number of biennials as well as the 2005 Istanbul Biennial, of which he was co-curator, Esche noted a move away from the event-culture biennial to one which works with educational, commission and residency models and which facilitates

artists to respond to the particularities of place. Esche advised staying locally grounded and having an understanding of the audience for whom the projects were created.<sup>4</sup> In 2008 with a different economic climate the measure of the large-scale context-specific exhibition needs to be articulated again. In the forthcoming decade, who will this audience be, will work be disseminated differently?

With a decade between each instance of Sculpture Projects Muenster enabling a generous period of research and preparation it is a project that is realised slowly over time.<sup>5</sup> In 2007, this marked it in sharp relief in a climate of newly emerging and rapidly re-occurring large-scale, international art events. Although not a declared theme (there was none) the context of international art tourism as well as a culture of speed and excess thus was of prime consideration for the 2007 curators Brigitte Franzen, Kasper

König and associate curator Carina Plath.<sup>6</sup> Will the ten year model such as the one Sculpture Projects Muenster employs be a more favorable option to consider for the future?

1 Claire Doherty "Curating Wrong Places... Or Where Have All the Penguins Gone?" in Paul O'Neill (ed), *Curating Subjects*, Open Editions, London, 2005, p.103

2 Charles Esche, 'Debate: Biennials', *Frieze*, June – August 2005. [http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/debate\\_biennials](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/debate_biennials) (accessed 03/10/08)

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid All good

5 A substantial budget of 5.25 million euros for 2007, with an average project budget of 40,000 euros, also perhaps enabled the project to develop at a slow and considered pace. Franzen, Brigitte, 'Material City', lecture by Brigitte Franzen, 26 November, 2006. [http://www.situations.org.uk/\\_uploaded\\_pdfs/BRITTEFRANZENfinal\\_000.pdf](http://www.situations.org.uk/_uploaded_pdfs/BRITTEFRANZENfinal_000.pdf) (accessed 03/10/08)

6 Brigitte Franzen, Kasper König and Carina Plath (ed), *Sculpture Projects Muenster 2007*, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Cologne, 2007, p.13. One artist's work reflecting this was Andreas Sickmann who addressed the issue of privatisation of public space and city branding directly in his ball of churned-up (and spat out) city mascots accompanied by a skip painted with pictogram-like images of same mascots. The surface of the mascots of which the ball is composed too is painted with pictogram-like images but instead with scenes depicting a privatised landscape. The work rings out a protest against public-private partnership. As Diedrich Diedrichsen pointed out in his review in *Frieze* (September 2007) Muenster contemplated utilising a city mascot itself but reconsidered the idea as a potential disruption to the subtle image of cultural sophistication produced by Sculpture Projects itself.

TO WHAT EXTENT is clarity of concept important in a 'subjectivity-driven method of curating'<sup>1</sup> and how effective can this method be in activating and articulating new ways of seeing or experiencing?

**FIONA FULLAM**  
ARTIST



Ross Cisneros, *Illegal Speech, Illegal City*, 2005

**M**ike Bode and Staffan Schmidt wrote in *Spaces of Conflict*: 'The paradoxical political strength of art lies in the fact that, in the midst of a well defined and highly specific discussion, art still has the capacity to stay on the margins. We appreciate how this non-integration gives art the capacity to stay open to the unknown and the unthinkable.'<sup>2</sup>

The IX Baltic Triennial in Vilnius in 2005 effectively employed a metaphor, BMW, as the title for the exhibition. This had a very broad scope, as it acted as an invitation to make work around that which lies outside of the legal symbolic order (insofar as that is possible), the official, regulated or known. Even the title, BMW, or Black Market World was ambiguous, as it was used as an acronym for many other possible, if implausible titles:

Bayerische Motorwerke; Blue Means Water; But Master Why; Bush Made War; Because Miracles Work; Boorish Mythical Werewolf. This metaphor of the black market invites intervention between the marginalised and the official, and exploration of the undocumented and the unknown. In this sense, the exhibition had a very real philosophical edge. It also served as a metaphor for intrigue and set up oppositions such as seen/unseen; legitimate/illegitimate; licit/illicit; permissive/strict; public/private. The exhibition was experimental, dealing with the underworld in its many permutations, and looking at the illicit habits of its culture, the shady areas of reality.

The curators, Sophia Hernandez Chong-Cuy, Raimundas Malasauskas and Alexis Vaillant, emphasised the importance of the enquiring

nature of this exhibition in the manner of their curating, which reflected the contradictions, intrigue, secrecy and uncertainty apparent in the clash of the two cultures, East and West, which co-exist in Vilnius. Their non-traditional approach to curating included a visit to a well-known medium in the city, as a way of developing off-site projects. There seemed to be several openings to the exhibition, which were neither confirmed nor denied. Shadow walls in CAC (Contemporary Art Centre) followed lines of earth energy, detected by analysts of bio-energy, which half obscured or revealed the works. The intention was clearly conceptualised, i.e. to explore the irrational and conjecture, to disorientate, to experiment, experience and push at the edges of thought, in an attempt to create a space for something new to emerge. This is a valuable way of working

according to philosopher Marcus Steinweg, who writes about the importance of trying to touch the limits of this world, without insisting that there be a second world.<sup>3</sup>

One highly original piece of work by Ross Cisneros entitled *Illegal Speech, Illegal City* (2005) consisted of a boxing match with Mindaugas Lukosaitis, and included statements by Latvian sociologist Normunds Koslovs and Lithuanian philosopher Gintautas Mazeikis, questioned for example, the symbolic order, capitalism and art.

BMW made this attempt in an un-self-conscious and uninhibited way. Ironically, it was a very honest show. It certainly activated curiosity and provided an opportunity or impetus to explore and experience anew, that which we thought we recognised. There was also resistance there, to being subsumed, consumed, and an acknowledgment, an embracing of the unknown.

1 Psibilskis, Liutauras. 'IX Baltic Triennial of International Art: Contemporary Art Centre' in *Artforum International*, Feb 2006, p.224 <http://find.galegroup.com/ips/printdoc.do?contentSet=IAC-Documents&docType=IA> (accessed 23/04/2008)

2 Mike Bode and Staffan Schmidt, 'Spaces of Conflict in Art and Its Institutions- Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations', edited by Nina Möntmann, Black Dog Publishing, London, 2006. p61.

3 Marcus Steinweg, speaking at a lecture at IADT, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin, on 5th December 2006. This lecture was part of a series entitled 'Visual Arts Future' curated by Sinead Hogan. See also <http://www.artnews.org/art-ist.php?i=2955> (accessed 03/09/2008)



Martha Rosler at unitednationsplaza, Berlin, Germany, 19-06 2007. Courtesy E-Flux Projects. Photo: Willi Brisco

# BEN GEOGHEGAN ARTIST

IS IT NECESSARY for curators to consider the local context of an international art event when a large portion of the audience experience the event via the internet?

Planned as a European art biennial without artworks, in the traditional sense, Manifesta 6 set out to change the format of Biennials, while maintaining the institutional mechanisms which allow the event to be realised. The Manifesta Foundation initiated this by accepting a proposal from Mai Abu ElDahab, Anton Vidokle and Florian Waldvogel to set up a ‘Temporary Art School in a Divided City’, the divided city being Nicosia in Cyprus.<sup>1</sup> Manifesta 6 exposed the city’s fraught socio-political tensions but these local tensions were unfortunately too raw in 2006 for the people of Nicosia, the curators and Manifesta to overcome, and the project was canceled after months of negotiations. The project started out with the intention of pro-

viding an investigation around the geographical and conceptual frameworks of Europe and directing this investigation into a critical re-interpretation of the complex colonial and post-colonial history of Europe. It maybe argued that Manifesta 6 failed in these intentions at the point of its cancellation. On the other hand, there is a substantial body of work developed for the event which can be viewed/experienced and thought through online,<sup>2</sup> while a further body of material is now generated around the unrealised event both online and in publications, such as Printed Project.<sup>3</sup>

In comparison, after the cancellation of Manifesta, Anton Vidokle went on to produce unitednationsplaza, selecting Berlin

as the appropriate location for realising his research for Manifesta. The intentions for unitednationsplaza were different to the failed Manifesta project, as it was an event devised to discuss the current possibilities for artistic agency and the city’s cosmopolitan population allowed its realisation. This project, as with Manifesta 6, exists in a virtual form on the web with a comprehensive website archiving the events with downloadable mp3 and mp4s. For a large section of the global art community it is this virtual encounter that forms the primary experience of the event. The material and discussions arising from this primary experience form an ever-evolving artwork.

The French cultural theorist Paul Virilio states, ‘Delocalization began, with the easel

*painting that stepped free of the cave and the skin to become a displaceable, nomadic object. The delocalization we’re dealing with today is nowhere. Art can be nowhere, it only exists in the emission and reception of a signal, only in feedback. The art of the virtual age is an art of feedback.*<sup>4</sup>

Is the participating audience required to be local?

1 In the 1960s, the capital was divided between the island’s Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities in the south and north respectively. On 3 April 2008, as part of efforts to reunify the island, a symbolic wall dividing the two communities at Ledra Street was opened.

2 See ‘Notes for an Art School’, <http://www.manifesta.org/manifesta6/index.htm> (accessed 05/10/08)

3 This issue of Printed Project Issue 6 was offered to the curatorial team of Manifesta 6 as a space to explore aspects of the unrealised project.

4 Ewa Wojtowicz, ‘Global vs. Local? The Art of Translocality’, HZ Journal, 2002. <http://www.hz-journal.org/n8/wojtowicz.html> (accessed 05/10/08)



# What mode of biennale would be best suited to Dublin?

**JENNIE GUY**  
ARTIST

**D**ublin is scheduled to have a biennale in the year 2010. What would make a Dublin biennale an interesting local event within a global artistic context? How would Ireland's small population, recent influx of immigration, post-colonial status, and current economy differentiate a Dublin biennale from other international art exhibitions? Are local demographics and cultural issues crucial to the curatorial agenda of a twenty-first-century art exhibition? Currently the exhibition *ev+a* (located in Limerick) is Ireland's closest alternative to the biennale format;<sup>1</sup> is this exhibition significant in the context of a potential Irish biennale sited in Dublin?

Contemporary art biennales exist in various forms and have a very strong place in the current global art movement. For example,

site-specificity was crucial to the 10th Istanbul Biennale curated by Hou Hanru,<sup>2</sup> but in the case of this year's 7th Gwang-ju Biennale<sup>3</sup> curated by Okwui Enwezor, emphasis is oriented towards a more globalised, open-ended exhibition format in which the lack of thematic framework becomes an overt curatorial gesture. The Manifesta biennale has a nomadic itinerary built into its core. The Liverpool biennale has a rigorous plan for urban regeneration and cultural tourism, seeking to unify its major art institutions to create a strong artistic platform with an international voice.<sup>4</sup>

As inferred above, there is a complex panorama of contemporary art biennales in existence for curators to incorporate into strategies concerning Dublin's first biennale. Which model will best serve Dublin, taking into account that this will be the city's first large-scale international exhibition? Or will Dublin have to beat its own path?

1 *ev+a* exhibition of visual+art is an annual exhibition of contemporary art... takes place in Limerick, Ireland every year [...] Curated each year by a different, single, invited curator of international standing, *ev+a* presents the work of Irish and international contemporary artists in a range of venues and settings, formal and alternative, throughout the city of Limerick. [http://www.eva.ie/default2.asp?active\\_page\\_id=3](http://www.eva.ie/default2.asp?active_page_id=3), Date accessed 05/10/08.

2 "Rising to his own challenge to find positive strategies in the face of global injustice and violence, curator Hou Hanru delivered a vibrant, solidly conceived exhibition [...] Crucially, through a group of highly symbolic and problematic venues, the city of Istanbul itself and Turkey's chequered history were taken as all too tangible examples of the project of modernization in the non-Western

## Is the development of alternative platforms in which contemporary art is encountered an effective way to trigger a 'con-structive ponder' in the viewer?

**RUSSELL HART**  
ARTIST

Audience at *economicthoughtprojects* launch, Ausland, Berlin, March 2008

world." Eichler, Dominic, "10th Istanbul Biennale", *Frieze Magazine*, Issue 112, January 2008, 164

3 "[...]Gwangju Biennale has provided the space in which to explore the changing nature of international artistic networks, and to examine new modes of artistic subjectivity and conditions of contemporary cultural production that extend beyond national borders or focus on regional modes of identification. [http://www.artdaily.org/index.asp?int\\_sec=11&int\\_new=25892&int\\_modo=1](http://www.artdaily.org/index.asp?int_sec=11&int_new=25892&int_modo=1). Date accessed 06/10/08

4 What's also notable about the Liverpool Biennale is that it began with private funding and that to date the mode of curating appears to be largely an in-house affair. This situation raises a double question as to how financial support and the provenance of the curatorial team contribute to the mode of individual biennales? Telephone interview with James Moores, founder of the Liverpool Biennale. 06/10/08

DOCUMENTA 11, 2002 Central to Okwui Enwezor's model for Documenta 11 was the concern that the space in which contemporary art functions and the mechanisms that bring it to the wider public domain require re-thinking and enlargement.

PLATFORMS 1-4 Through the use of four preliminary platforms Enwezor used the model of learning through conversation and sharing of knowledge independent of a gallery space. Effectively asking the questions, 'Can contemporary art be employed to effect social change?' and 'if so how can this be done?'

These platforms asked the audience to engage. These platforms asked the audience to ponder.

DISCUSSION If these and other platforms that operate outside the domain of art are an effective way to inspire action then what is it that occurs within this realm and what is activated?

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT for the curator, in showing film and video in the gallery space/context and in order to captivate the audience, to create a balance between subjective and objective spaces and in turn do justice to the space and the work?

**SARAH HURL**  
ARTIST

For curators who are trying to create ideal and suitable spaces for filmic and video works, there is a tension between the balance that should be achieved between the subjective space, a space that creates an atmosphere that captivates its audience and cultivates an ideal space for contemplative and personal thought, and objective space that creates the clarity for reading the object alone. Films, screenings and dark spaces with projected narratives are so embedded in everyday culture that they may be deemed more welcoming than the white cube. There are many considerations at hand, multi-video installations in the gallery, single screenings and outdoor screenings in public spaces. A large number of film or video artists can be shown in a row in a film hall or singular cinema space, and not given precious wall space for projection in the gallery when a predominantly white or quiet room is required. If this is the case can the old cinema or auditorium do all the works equal justice in terms of their subjective and objective qualities? Or is

it an exciting and useful way for curators to further explain their thought out concepts by including documentaries and narratives, or more entertainingly giving grounding to the historical or factual concepts of their exhibition, while leaving gallery space for pieces that have less of a durational/narrative quality.

In 2006, curator Caroline Koebel curated a film screening at the University of Buffalo entitled *The Inventing Space of Cinema*.

Maya Deren's first film experiment *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) was the keystone of the programme Koebel has said about the piece;

*'At one point the film's protagonist (played by Deren) strides in a space that only cinema makes possible [...] The Inventing Space of Cinema re-positions Meshes of the Afternoon within a frame of works- including live action, animation, and re-purposed footage- that use experimental means and investigatory techniques to pose questions about objective and subjective space, gendered spatiality, and filmic architectonics. The frame is intended to open a necessary entrance to Meshes,*

*one enabling the pre-canon film's flux and indeterminacy to sneak past into the present.'*<sup>1</sup>

Curator Joachim Jäger has said;

*'Projections onto several screens or within specially designed architectural backdrops expand the film in space, creating new points of reference and shifting points of view. In place of the screening of a single film, as in the cinema we are confronted by multiple points of view and perspectives. These demand a heightened mode of perception while compelling viewers to question their own stand point.'*<sup>2</sup>

When discussing Doug Aitken's large installation *eraser* (1998), Jäger says that *'this expansion of film in space takes up a fundamental cinematic principle: The human need to be transported to another place, to assume a different identity, and to use a perfect illusion to bring about this transition.'*<sup>3</sup> Aitken has said *'In my installations I don't see the narrative ending with the image on-screen. Every inch of the work or the architecture is a component of the narrative.'*<sup>4</sup>

Is it the development of what we call art, what we see as art today, feature films and short films, black and white, silent films and film noirs etc? Are we really recognising the true artistic merit and craftsmanship in the creation of these films? And when sited in their original (and created for) setting in the cinema, what does it say when they are shown looped in the white cube or elsewhere? Is justice being given to the work or is it a way of re-defining its meanings and influences amongst the contemporary?

In the consideration of the selection of work,

the space for that work and how works function together, what is at stake for the works?

This question is intensified in particular in the context of large scale exhibitions when it is plausible for film screenings as well as exhibition spaces for video and multi-video installations but what is at stake? If the space is to take a back seat and let the work do the talking, in terms of the cinema/gallery context of captivating the audience, and the tone of filmic and video installation work, how important is it for the curator to create a balance between subjective and objective spaces and how important are these issues in terms of doing justice to the space and the work?

1 Koebel, Caroline, from <http://www.carolinekoebel.com/curating.html>, *The Inventing Space of Cinema*, University at Buffalo, 2006, (accessed 30/09/08)

2 Jäger, Joachim, "Caught between Images: The Heightened Perception of the Filmic" in Christopher Eamon, Anette Hüscher, Joachim Jäger, Gabriele Knapstein (ed.), *Beyond Cinema: The Art of Projection. Films, Videos and Installations from 1963-2005. Works from the Friedrich Christian Flick Collection im Hamburger Bahnhof, from the Kamlich Collection and Others*, Hatje Cantz, Berlin, 2007, p.29.

3 Ibid.

4 Aitken, Doug, Amanda Sharp in conversation with Doug Aitken 2001, in Jäger, Joachim, "Caught between Images: The Heightened Perception of the Filmic" in Christopher Eamon, Anette Hüscher, Joachim Jäger, Gabriele Knapstein (ed.), *Beyond Cinema: The Art of Projection. Films, Videos and Installations from 1963-2005. Works from the Friedrich Christian Flick Collection im Hamburger Bahnhof, from the Kamlich Collection and Others*, Hatje Cantz, Berlin, 2007, p.29.

HARALD SZEEMANN REFERRED to his evolving curatorial practice as the continuous, creation of his 'Palais Ideal'. Is it possible for the exhibition space to convey the metaphysical in the form of a constructed, temporary world unrelated to society? What are the social, artistic and curatorial legacies of these worlds and what purpose do they serve for the curator, artist and audience if any? In the present climate, are curators under pressure to reflect broad socio-political concerns over those which are individual and subjective?

## ELAINE HURLEY

ARTIST

Reflecting on the evolution of his 43 years of curatorial practice, Harald Szeemann remarked:

*'When you've been doing exhibitions for 43 years, you come to a certain point: the facteur Cheval said that with 43 years a human being reaches the equinox of life and can start to build his castle in the air, his "Palais ideal." From this moment on, even if you do a show with contemporary artists, you want it to be not just a group show but a temporary world. And maybe this is why my exhibitions become bigger-because the inner world is getting bigger [...] Artists, like curators work on their own, grappling with their attempts to make a world in which to survive. I always said that if I lived in the 19th century as King Ludwig II, when I felt the need to identify myself with another world I would build a castle. Instead, as curator I do temporary exhibi-*

*tions. We are lonely people, faced with superficial politicians, with donors and sponsors, and one must deal with all of this. I think it is here that the artist finds a way to form his own world and live his obsessions. For me, this is the real society.'*

Szeemann's statement suggests that as his practice evolved he allowed himself to use it as an escapist tool to create an idealistic world borne from the imaginary rather than directly reflecting societal concerns. The exhibition, according to him, is a vital world that he creates to share with artists, whom he feels an alliance with. It is a world that allows communication and interaction on a deeper level than society normally facilitates. Is it possible to share a conceptual understanding of the imaginary and what, if anything is lost in the translation from artistic concept, curatorial intervention and the reception of the

viewer? What role does mainstream society play in these exhibitions, if any? Szeemann's expansive, pioneering career and admirable reputation may have afforded him the luxury of being able to indulge in the creation of his "Palais Ideal" but for the novice curator are there pressures to reflect broad socio-political concerns over those that are individual and subjective?

<sup>1</sup> Harald Szeemann, in an interview with Carol Thea, *Here Time Becomes Space*, Sculpture Magazine Online, June 2001-Vol. 20 No.5, 30-08-08. <http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag01/june01/bien/bien.shtml>

# DOES THE CURATOR become a selective cultural anthropologist in attempts to preserve the expression of distinct individual cultures at a time of dislocation deracination and migration?

**VANESSA MARSH**  
ARTIST

**O**kwui Enwezor declared that part of the responsibility of curators is to say, 'This is what I am doing, and it is not the final word.'<sup>1</sup> Stating that 'We have to deal with issues of art', he included making distinctions in quality and clarifying the different ways in which 'artist' is defined. Being an artist is not the same in Africa as it is in the United States.

Referencing Documenta XI, Enwezor spoke of the emergence of a post-colonial identity, and that he and his colleagues aimed at something much larger than an art exhibition: they were seeking to find out what came after imperialism. In this search, a series of public symposia entitled 'Platforms' occurred. Platforms 1-4 were held in Vienna/Berlin, New Delhi, St Lucia and Lagos, and Platform 5 was the exhibition Documenta XI, in Kassel. Enwezor sought

through these platforms to 'mark the location of culture today and the spaces in which culture intersects with domains of complex knowledge circuits.'<sup>2</sup>

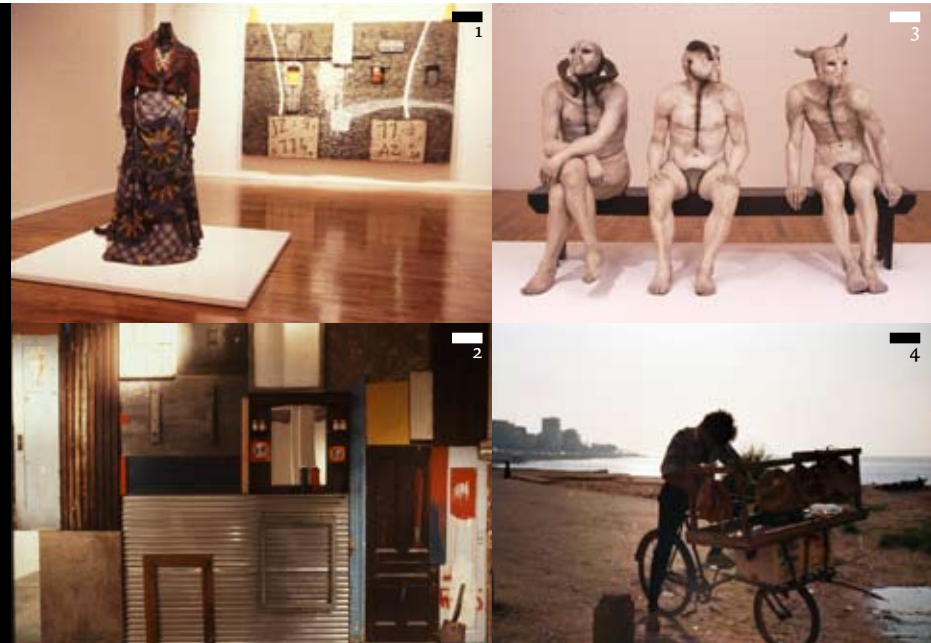
Enwezor's *The Short Century, Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945-1994* (Munich, Berlin, Chicago, New York, 2001) aimed to show through the interdisciplinary approach of the exhibition, links with modernist and contemporary artistic standpoints through historical documents and confronted the constructs of colonial and anti-colonial propaganda (See figs. 1-3). Visitors to the exhibition became witnesses, in a multimedia archive which provided new evidence for a biography of the African continent, retrospectively outlining the interplay of culture, politics and art, in building a new social space by Africans and for Africans. *The Short Century*,

aimed to show the intellectual side of decolonisation, along with its collective memory.

Regarding Documenta XI, Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes noted that from an Irish perspective the exhibition or its associated platforms could have been of vital importance. 'As postcolonial issues came to the fore in the art world, it was officially accepted that artists could create cutting-edge art anywhere in the world without needing to gravitate to the centre to 'make it.'<sup>3</sup> Despite the position that Ireland holds as historically the first postcolonial country, a vibrant centre of post-colonial studies and a country where artists reflect on these issues, Ireland was excluded by not being listed among either the marginalised or the mainstream artists, which were exhibited alongside one another in Kassel (with the exception of Irish artist James Coleman,

who is more of a 'Documenta regular'). With Documenta XI claiming its concept as dealing with post-colonialism (with research and debate) and giving great prominence to off-site platforms as an integral part of Documenta, should Ireland have been included as a venue or 'Platform' within the exhibition in the context of an Irish peace process alongside Palestinian despair, Uruguayan torture, Congolese resistance, Moldovan railway workers, racial tensions in the UK, contemporary Lebanese historians (See Fig.4) and Inuits under siege?

So, at a time of dislocation, mass migration and deracination on a global scale, is it the role of a curator to act as a cultural anthropologist, seeking to preserve the expression of distinctive cultures without misrepresentations? Or is it inevitable that the plight of a curator is one



of 'scapegoat; ... in the vast front line of a big battle for meaning under conditions of uncertainty?'<sup>4</sup>

1 Michael Brenson, 'The curator's moment', Art Journal, Winter, 1998. [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0425/is\\_4\\_57/ai\\_53747204/pg\\_1?tag=artBody;col](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0425/is_4_57/ai_53747204/pg_1?tag=artBody;col)(accessed 24/09/08)

2 Okwui Enwezor, preface to Documenta 11\_Platform 5, Documenta11 Platform5: The Catalog by Okwui Enwezor, Carlos Basualdo, Jean Fisher. Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2002 p. 40.

3 Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes Kassel and Frankfurt : Article: Documenta 11 and Manifesta 4, Circa issue 101, Autumn 2002, pp. 70-75.

4 Zygmunt Bauman talks with Maaretta Jaukkuri [www.khib.no/khib/visningsrom/avgangstustillinger/avgangstustillinger\\_2007\\_\\_1/artism/zygmunt\\_bauman\\_talks\\_with\\_maaretta\\_jaukkuri](http://www.khib.no/khib/visningsrom/avgangstustillinger/avgangstustillinger_2007__1/artism/zygmunt_bauman_talks_with_maaretta_jaukkuri) (accessed 6/10/08)

Fig 1. Yinka Shonibare, Boy/Girl, 1998. Courtesy of the artist. All images are Courtesy P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center from P.S.1's presentation of Short Century (2002)

Fig 2. Antonio Ole, Margem da Zona Limite, 2002. Courtesy of the artist. All images are Courtesy P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center from P.S.1's presentation of Short Century (2002)

Fig 3. Jane Alexander, Butcher Boys, 1985. Courtesy of the artist. All images are Courtesy P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center from P.S.1's presentation of Short Century (2002)

Fig 4. The Atlas Group/Walid Raad, I Only Wish That I Could Weep (Operator #17), 2000, 6'28" (video stills) Copyright of the artist, Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery

# To what extent is a conscious suspension of disbelief a necessary pre-condition for the spectator to read an exhibition? Do we trade on suspending our disbelief by becoming a willing viewer to the unexpected?

## DENISE MC DONAGH ARTIST

While exploring the idea of illusion and deception, demonstrating the ways in which art and magic share a similar goal of 'cunning and conning', does the curator trick the spectator into unknowing participation? Examining one of the basic principles found in magic which is 'sleight of hand' or 'conjuring', recalling artists creating scandals as a tool, the exhibition The Last Piece by John Fare highlights the fact that both art-making and magic performance require a willing viewer to agree to participate in creating illusion and deception.

This exhibition tests out the ways in which the language and imagery of conjuring and distraction offer a critique of representation. Inside the mystery of the John Charles Fare story,<sup>1</sup> lies a myth<sup>2</sup> with the regular resurfacing of his legacy. Was he real or not real, did he decapitate himself or not?<sup>3</sup> The notion of art emerges as a kind of perceptual trick of

the hand which sets in motion a willful play of confidences between viewer and spectacle.

This idea of viewer/audience complicity underlines the approaches taken by the contemporary artists in the exhibition, leading to double readings and false appearances that establish a game that the viewer must be willing to participate in.

1 The story of John Fare surfaces every couple of years and as the Tim Craig version of the story goes: 'John Charles Fare was born in 1936 in Toronto, Ontario. These exciting facts were always made available to members of his audience, for whose benefit Fare's birth certificate was always displayed under glass at the entrance to each of the theatres where, over the years, he conducted his 'appearances'.' Craig, Tim. 'John Fare', Studio International 184, November 1972 (#949), pp. 160-161.

2 Fare was a performance artist whose performances involved the amputation of parts of his body and their replacement with metal or plastic pieces. Between 1964 and 1968, performing across Europe and Canada, he was lobotomized

and lost a thumb, two fingers, eight toes, one eye, both testicles, his right hand and several patches of skin. The amputated parts were preserved in alcohol. It is also said that Fare had the amputations performed by a randomly-controlled machine and ended his career by having his head amputated.

3 'Raimundas Malasauskas, curator and acting executor of the John Fare Estate, which he has legally registered, insists there is a 99 percent chance John Fare existed and a 99 percent chance he didn't. An homage to a hoax?' quoted from Rehberg, Vivian, 'The Last Piece by John Fare', Frieze Magazine, Jun-Aug 2007, Issue 108.

# CAN THE TERM 'destroy-in-order-to-remake' be considered as a current curatorial methodology within contemporary art institutions?

**KITTY ROGERS**  
ARTIST



Uli Aigner, *Ghost-akademie*, 2005, installation view, ACADEMY, Muhka, Antwerp photo MUHKA.

'You have to begin by destroying their idea of what the art school is'<sup>1</sup>

This quote is taken from an interview with artist Tobias Rehberger by Mai Abu ElDahab as part of Notes for an Art School, Manifesta 6<sup>2</sup> and refers directly to the methodology of an art school educator. However, is this framework of destruction as a means to reconstruct ideas and expectations, to reconstitute pedagogy and hierarchies within an institution, a tamed force of iconoclasm and a method of reinterpretation of an established curatorial methodology?

A.C.A.D.E.M.Y Learning from the Museum, Learning from Art in MuKHA, the Van Abbemuseum and Kunstverein Hamburg, functioned as a reflexive exhibition for the museum and the premise of learning. Irit Rogoff wrote in her accompanying text 'Academy as Potentiality' about the potential ways an institution can be occupied, 'as a space

of unexpected learning'<sup>3</sup> where one expectation can imagine another. This process invents a means by which a public and an institution can negotiate their pedagogical relationship. The academy is intrinsically linked to the notion of iconoclasm, it is the political resonance of cultural knowledge, and the established institution is the space which must be disrupted as a means to establish a new order. The 'Circles of Enlightenment' of Documenta 12, in 2007, loosely titled 'Is modernity our antiquity?' gave an opportunity for visitors to stop, consider and discuss their experience without expectations of overarching conclusions or sweeping truths. The institution of Documenta was providing a means of collective engagement and non-didactic exchange. Are these calculated interactions and interventions successful in unravelling implicit institutional structures and are there alternatives to this premeditated self-reflexivity of the institution?

The understanding of the curatorial position as a preserver and keeper of a collection is challenged by the reverse role of destroyer of patterns of knowledge as a means to gain systemic renewal. JJ Charlesworth points out in his text 'Why an institution of contemporary art(s) like this, and not any other?', written for the Institute of Contemporary Art's sixtieth anniversary, the differentiation between artist and curator as that of institutional power, the curator embedded within the processes of inclusion and exclusion of the establishment.<sup>4</sup> The apparent anachronistic tendency of being an Institute of the Contemporary appears as an indicator as to why curatorial shifts describe actions of transgression, abandonment and demolition as a means to continually reinvent and ruin institutional contexts within the parameters of exhibition. Thus, is destruction as implicit as invention within the remit of the curatorial and does this action function as revisionism?

1 Mai Abu ElDahab. Kitch, 'Destruction and Education.. An interview with Tobias Rehberger', 2005. p.2, <http://www.manifesta.org/docs/12.pdf> (accessed 03/10/08)

2 Manifesta 6, Notes for an Art School, was to take the form of an art school in the Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus, divided by tensions between Turkish and Cypriot populations. The project was ended when Nicosia for art terminated its contract with the curators Florian Waldvogel, Mai Abu ElDahab, Anton Vidokle and with the Manifesta Foundation.

3 Irit Rogoff, 'Academy as Potentiality' in Angelika Nollert (ed), A.C.A.D.E.M.Y., Revolver: Frankfurt, 2006, p.2

4 JJ Charlesworth 'Why and institution of Contemporary Art(s) like this and not any other?' in Nought to Sixty, ICA, London, 2008 [http://www.ica.org.uk/Not about institutions%20but why we are so unsure of them%20by JJ Charlesworth+18217](http://www.ica.org.uk/Not%20about%20institutions%20but%20why%20we%20are%20so%20unsure%20of%20them%20by%20JJ%20Charlesworth+18217) (accessed 03/10/08)

IF GIVEN A *carte blanche*, would the preferred means for curators to realise exhibitions be through the artist/curator collaborative model or as an autonomous curator?

Is the possibility of conflicting interests ever a cause for concern in collaboration?

## LINDA SHEVLIN ARTIST

In an interview in 2006 where Raimundas Malasauskas was asked to respond to the practice of collaborating he replied:

*'[collaboration] allows you to create new pseudonyms, [...] you can produce different types of production under it so it's not coming from a single source. I think it's more interesting to create new identities while collaborating with other people, then you're not lost in your own world [...] a temporary, imaginary identity. I had a number of collaborations that would take from me something that I wouldn't be able otherwise to do on my own, it's like facilitating each other.'*<sup>1</sup>

Through collaboration, the notion of authorship becomes blurred by the multiplicity of contributors. It could be said that collaboration is a reaction against the formal qualities of an art object because there cannot be a singular original claim for its creation. Charles Green

uses the notion of the intervention of *'The Third Hand'* to describe the model of authorship applied when artists collaborate, where he claims the collaborative process itself is an independent, though ephemeral, entity.<sup>2</sup> Could this also be used to describe the complexity of authorship in curatorial collaborations?

What is a curator to do when the vision of their collaborator no longer corresponds with theirs? For example in the instance of the Jean Luc Godard and curator Dominique Paini's collaborative project *Collage(s) de France – Archaeology of the Cinema* at the Pompidou Centre, Paris, originally intended to function as a montage of Godard's methods and motifs, it instead was an exhibition of an exhibition that never was. What was eventually realised by Godard alone, after feuding with the institution and his collaborator, was

*Travel(s) in Utopia*, an intervention in the galleries of the Pompidou Centre using scaled models of the proposed exhibition installation plans along with domestic paraphernalia and screenings of films by or inspired by Godard. Both Paini and Godard were absent from the opening despite Godard's presence at the Pompidou up to the last minute tinkering with galleries. This situation begs the question is collaborating really worth the risk when the outcome can be so indeterminate?

<sup>1</sup> An interview between Larry Rinder and Raimundas Malasauskas, 4th Nov 2006, <http://frankprattle.wordpress.com>, 3rd October 2008

<sup>2</sup> Charles Green, *The Third Hand: Collaboration in Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2001.

Does the intervention between artwork and viewer, through the educative attempts of museums, mediated and staged by curators or re-enacted or reintroduced in new ways by other artists, help or hinder the viewers' experience of the actual or original artwork?

## BARBORA SVECOVA ARTIST

In 2005, widely acclaimed New York Times' art critic Roberta Smith pointed out that museums are trying to justify themselves by making art 'do something' by taking on the role of an educational institution instead of just being what they really are:

*'Repositories for essential kind of human knowledge to which every person has a right to have a free access. [...] Museums should stop acting like something else [...] and go back to what they do best; Putting things on view for people to look at. [...] Art is an essential, sustaining, nutritional thing. It is like food. It is like sex. It has to do nothing.'*<sup>1</sup>

Later on in her talk Smith also suggested that one of the possible reasons of the changing situation is the difficulty for museums to maintain their tradition and train 'good curators.'<sup>2</sup>

Two years later curator Jens Hoffmann in

another lecture commented on the shifting role of curatorial practice. Acknowledging the traditional function of the curator as the facilitator, organiser or caretaker of an art collection, he described his frustration with limited models of exhibiting art. It was this frustration which led him to the developments in his own practice and the shift in perceiving curatorial practice: 'curator as creator', not as a person who will organise 'things to be put up for people to look at.'<sup>3</sup> Jens Hoffman's necessity to 'stage' the exhibitions seems to come from an ambition to make them more effective; to help the art in this 'doing something', instead of just being presented.

In 2005 Jens Hoffmann curated an exhibition called Klütterkammer in the ICA, London, where he encouraged artist Jon Bock to present in his own manner a collection of works by

other artists. Jon Bock introduced pieces by some of the main figures of contemporary art that are also the main influences on his own work. At the same time Marina Abramovic in The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, recreated and re-enacted a number of key art performances by performance artists from the sixties and seventies.

The tendency to reintroduce older important art works suggests the need of art makers to educate/re-educate the public or themselves in visual art. The effort of art institutions to explain art and the endeavour of curators to present art in a more effective way does not seem to allow art to freely speak for itself neither does it allow the spectator to experience it directly without any assistance.

1 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Art Criticism, Art Theory and the Art Market', a lecture by Roberta Smith held at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, 5th October 2005.

2 Ibid.

3 'Understanding Curatorial Practice', a lecture by Jens Hoffmann held at the California College of the Arts, San Francisco, California, 6th February 2007.

IN THIS COMMUNICATION age the media plays an important role in the life of an exhibition and, in many cases, it is a simple and effective tool to publicise an event. However, if this relationship backfires can the situation be managed? When dealing with a controversial subject can the work and its context be sure to get a fair airing?

## SUZANNAH VAUGHAN ARTIST

Many exhibitions dealing with the same subject matter are received by the public in very different ways, some slide softly in and out of existence while others are surrounded by a sea of controversy and politics. The media is a powerful communication tool but can also be a dangerous one. When dealing with controversial issues how does one ensure against a strategic breakdown in the press?



Deliberately attempting to use sensationalist marketing through the media, organisers of Sensation, at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1999/2000, experienced how provoking a particular response can go drastically wrong. With ninety works by YBAs (Young British Artists), the show carried a mock health warning on its publicity poster stating *'The contents of this exhibition may cause shock, vomiting, confusion, panic, euphoria, and anxiety.'*<sup>1</sup> The subsequent controversy focused mainly on the work *The Holy Virgin Mary* by Chris Ofili, which depicted a black Madonna adorned with elephant dung and sexually explicit photographs. The painting was received with mixed feelings by the public; some wondered what all the fuss was about. There were some obvious benefits to the museum's publicity strategy in attracting new and diverse audiences. Yet another reaction was embodied by New York Mayor Giuliani's vocal insistence that the exhibition was *'anti-Christian'* and the subsequent attempt to revoke the museum's lease and remove its municipal funding unless the exhibition was closed. The Brooklyn Museum of Art chose to stand their ground and successfully won their case.

An earlier project, also called Sensation, chose an ultimately destructive means of managing a similar situation. The National Gallery of Victoria closed Sensation, a retrospective exhibition of works by American artist Andres Serrano, after it was the subject of two attacks; the first from Dr. George Pell, the Catholic archbishop of Melbourne, who on grounds of blasphemy applied unsuccessfully for a Supreme Court injunction against the

NGV. This was followed by a physical attack on the work *Piss Christ*, depicting a crucifix submerged in the artist's urine, by two youths with a hammer. Prior to the opening, the NGV had chosen to capitalize on the artist's controversial reputation by placing sensational advertising in the local media. *'Provocative'*, *'controversial'* and *'confronting'* were words used to describe the exhibition in the ensuing media frenzy and public reaction. The decision to cancel the exhibition by the museum after this attack is something from which many feel the NGV never really recovered, reflecting a policy of self-censorship. The manner in which they chose to promote the exhibition was a high risk strategy; failing to manage this properly, damaged their reputation.

So can a landmine of media attention be managed when dealing with delicate issues? The project *Concerning War-Soft Target*, *War as a Daily, First-Hand Reality*, was conceived of as a space for contemplation. Organisers and curators hoped that the exhibition *Soft Target* and coinciding symposium *Undercurrents* would reinforce the direction towards contemplation and debate, moving away from the shock effect and politically driven imagery that might attract adverse representation. Time was their strategy: time to prepare and gather information, and presentation of the exhibition to the public was considered in the same manner, emphasising that the audience had to take their time to investigate and absorb the work. This delicate way of approaching the subject and a conscious decision to avoid antagonizing the press achieved a positive reac-

tion for *Soft Target*, allowing a contextualised, lasting impression on those who engaged.

So how is an exhibition which deals with controversial subjects to approach the need to court the media's attention alongside the need for that attention to focus on the work and its context?

<sup>1</sup> Rapp, Cristopher, 'Dung Deal - Brooklyn Museum of Art's "Sensation" exhibition,' BNET Business Network, Oct 25, 1999, [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1282/is\\_20\\_51/ai\\_56220691](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1282/is_20_51/ai_56220691), (accessed 3/10/2008)

# BIO-GRAP-HIES

LIZ BURNS is the Development Manager at Firestation Artists' Studios, Dublin, where she has worked since 2002. Her role involves the commissioning and project managing of numerous public art projects, often of a socially engaged and collaborative nature. Her research centres on participatory models of arts practice and their relationship to the public sphere.

HELEN CAREY has worked on visual arts projects in Galway, Dublin, London, Suffolk, and Bristol. She has also worked on projects in Irish Cultural Diplomacy in Paris, France. Her research interests include notions of nationalism and identity in the 21st century and the relationship between the state and artistic production.

LOUISE CHERRY is based in Wicklow, Ireland and has exhibited both nationally and internationally. Her work investigates the interplay between photography, performance, video, text, interview and sculpture in an attempt to subvert the formal expectations of art-making and presentation. The involvement of the audience with the work is critical to her installation explorations.

CAROLINE COWLEY is Public Art

Co-ordinator with Fingal County Council. She is responsible for commissioning a number of artists projects in the public realm and is currently researching models of curation in relation to both gallery space and 'site' in order to develop a best practice model for commissioning. She is particularly interested in how the dialogue between artist and commissioner can influence project outcomes. Curated exhibitions include All in the Detail, Draiocht Arts Centre, Dublin, 2008 and Not in Alphabetical Order, Farmleigh, Dublin, 2008.

CLEO FAGAN was curator of Stone Gallery in Dublin from February 2005 until March 2008. Currently, she is researching the support of artistic practice and the facilitation of cultural exchange through artist/cultural producer residency programmes.

FIONA FULLAM is an artist whose practice includes installation, video, photography and writing. She investigates the concept of 'self' and how individuals function in society. She has a MA in German and is also interested in language and the construction of meaning.

BEN GEOGHEGAN is an artist whose practice revolves around the investigation of public collections of painting, most recently working with the collection of Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane. He is currently a member of Artspace Studios and was a founding member of the artist-led gallery space 126/G126 in Galway, Ireland.

JENNIE GUY's recent projects include curated and performed exhibitions A Salon and Just tell me the truth, as part of

MAVIS Summer exhibitions in Studio 6, Temple Bar Galleries & Studios, Dublin, 2008. She has also published critical and creative texts for various catalogues and art magazines, including Circa.

RUSSELL HART is the director of economic thought projects, an organization that aims to develop collaborative projects and live events as a way of sharing ideas, knowledge and creative endeavour. Currently economic thought projects has assumed the moniker of an independent record label as a vehicle for its various activities.

SARAH HURL's research interests stem from a belief that contemporary film and video can merge realities through theatrical narratives that create psychological and emotional impact. As a performer, she has adopted 'protagonist' roles and is interested in developing this aspect of her work using the language of gesture and supporting visual accessories. In 2008, she was awarded an OPEN e v+ a award for her work in the exhibition Open/Invited e v+ a: Too Early For Vacation, selected by Hou Hanru.

ELAINE HURLEY is an artist whose practice explores the ambiguous space that lies between the still and moving image. She utilizes this 'in-distinction' to examine the domestic as an arena of subtle conflicts.

VANESSA MARSH is a Dublin-based artist. Her practice treads a line between painting, sculpture and installation, evolving in response to newly examined memories of places and events. Her current work involves 'subverting' the surface of gathered shells, transforming them with minute marks, and disrupting nature with man-

made symbols until the viewer becomes unsure about what at first seems familiar. Her work is included in numerous public and private collections including the Office of Public Works and Bank of Ireland.

DENISE MCDONAGH is an artist and co-founder of Lorg Printmakers, Galway. Her research is based on the idea of pattern being guided by a set of rules that are a means to construct a form. Her current body of work is engaged with processes of collaboration and the exchange of skills through new media and interactive art.

KITTY ROGERS is an artist living and working in Dublin. She is interested in histories and memories embedded within cultures of ornamentation, motif and pattern making.

LINDA SHEVLIN is an artist whose practice is concerned with contemporary notions of landscape in the current climate of environmental, economical and social change. Her previous work primarily used the medium of paint but she has recently begun working in video, photography and sound.

BARBORA SVECOVA is a visual arts graduate of the University of Ostrava in the Czech Republic and is currently based in Dublin, where she works with performance. Barbora's main theoretical and practical research interests within recent studies are the convergence and confines of visual art and theatre.

SUZANNAH VAUGHAN's work, which involves the creation of sculptures from concrete and glass, is influenced by space, light and architecture. She lives and works in Galway, Ireland.



Since 2002 Bart De Baere is director of the MuHKA, the Antwerp Museum of Contemporary Art which also has a film museum component and which co-publishes the *Afterall Journal*.

BART DE BAERE (b. 1960) studied archeology and history of art, and started early on to work as an art critic. He worked as curator for Jan Hoet in the Ghent Contemporary Art Museum (now S.M.A.K.) and was appointed as commissioner for Documenta IX. Bart De Baere was also adviser for the Soros Foundations in Eastern Europe, the biennials in Johannesburg and São Paulo, and for the Flemish Minister of Culture in the formulation of a new policy for cultural heritage. Since the exhibition *This is the Show and the Show is Many Things* at the Ghent museum he has primarily curated exhibitions abroad. He also served as Chairman of the Flemish Museum Commission and was until 2008 Chairman of the Flemish Council for Culture.

Bart De Baere cofounded the Time Festival in Ghent and the Art Centre Wiels in Brussels. His published writing includes *'The Integrated Museum'*, in *Stopping the Process* (Helsinki: NIFKA, 1998), and *'Potentiality and Public Space, Archives as a Metaphor and Example for a Political Culture'*, in *Interarchive* (Lüneburg/ Cologne: Walther König, 2002).



Photo: Ben Symons

CAROLYN CHRISTOV-BAKARGIEV, Bulgarian on her father's side, Piedmontese on her mother's, is the Artistic Director of documenta 13 (2012). She was the Artistic Director of the XVI Sydney Biennial in 2008 and has been Chief Curator at Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea since 2002. For Castello di Rivoli, she curated the exhibitions *I Moderni / The Moderns* and *Janet Cardiff* in 2003; *William Kentridge, Pierre Huyghe and Franz Kline* in 2004; *Volti nella folla / Faces in the Crowd* and *T1 - La sindrome di Pantagruel / The Pantagruel Syndrome* in 2005; *Concetto, Corpo e Sogno / Concept, Body and Dream* in 2006.

Formerly an independent curator, she organized exhibitions such as *Molteplici*

*Culture / Multiple Cultures* (1992), *Il suono rapido delle cose / The Rapid Sound of Things*, an homage to John Cage for the Venice Biennale (1993), the first large retrospective dedicated to Alberto Burri after his death (1996), *Città-Natura / City-Nature* (1997) and a triennial exhibition series *La Ville, le Jardin, la Mémoire*, at the a Villa Medici, Rome (1998-2000). As Senior Curator at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center/ a MoMA Affiliate, from 1999 to 2001, she conceived and co-curated the group shows *Around 1984* (2000), *Some New Minds* (2000) and *Animations* (2001, traveling), as well as numerous solo exhibitions dedicated to artists such as Carla Accardi, Janet Cardiff, Georges Adeagbo, Arturo Herrera and Santiago Sierra.

She is the author of numerous texts on contemporary art and on the relationships between recent international art and the historical avant-gardes; these publications include *Arte Povera*, published by Phaidon Press in 1999. Her other publications include the first monograph on South African artist William Kentridge (1997), as well as works on Pierre Huyghe and on Franz Kline.

She has participated in numerous juries, including those for the Venice Biennale (2001), the Premio Benesse (2001) and Art Pace (2003). She divides her time between Italy, New York and Sydney; she is married and has two daughters, Lucia and Rosa.



■  
TONE OLAF NIELSEN (b. 1967) holds a Cand. Phil. in Art History from the University of Copenhagen (1994) and an MA in Critical and Curatorial Studies from UCLA (2002). Working as an independent curator and educator since 1996, she has curated a large number of exhibition projects and events that critically unpack questions of difference and diversity, intolerance and conviviality, agency and resistance in the age of global capitalism, migration, terror, and war, including: *Democracy When!? Activist Strategizing in Los Angeles* (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, 2002) and *Minority Report: Challenging Intolerance in Contemporary Denmark* (different locations in Aarhus and environs, Denmark, 2004). In addition, Nielsen is active within the artist-curator collective Goll & Nielsen, which she co-founded with artist Morten Goll in 1998 in order to produce projects of a more direct community-mobilizing nature. In 2005, she furthermore co-founded the independent curatorial collective Kuratorisk Aktion together with curator Frederikke Hansen. The collective works internationally from Berlin and Copenhagen and is committed to using curating to generate new critical knowledges about the global capitalist order and the ideologies of inequality

■  
Having recently come back from the year 2007 RAIMUNDAS M ALASAUSKAS is currently writing a new script for *F for Fake* by Orson Welles and guest co-editing # 16 issue of *Dot Dot Dot* magazine. As a speculative curator he produced events and publications for audiences of various ages and time periods ([www.rye.tw](http://www.rye.tw)) Before moving into simultaneity he spent 10 years engineering concepts and projects at CAC Vilnius. It included producing of two seasons of CAC TV program also known as *'Every program is a pilot, every program is the final episode.'* In 2007 together with Aaron Schuster he co-wrote libretto of *Cellar Door* opera by Loris Greaud at Palais de Tokyo, Paris. Meanwhile besides teaching at CCA in San Francisco and writing for [www.rai.lt](http://www.rai.lt) Malasauskas curates at Artists Space in NYC.

that sustain it. Collaborating with artists as well as theorists and activists from all over the world, the collective produces exhibitions, interventions, and events that engage such ideologies as nationalism, racism, patriarchal supremacy, and heteronormativity in a transnational, interdisciplinary, intersectional, and affirmative action manner. In 2006, Kuratorisk Aktion realized the comprehensive exhibition project *Rethinking Nordic Colonialism: A Postcolonial Exhibition Project in Five Acts* (Iceland, Greenland, The Faroe Islands, and Finnish Sápmi, 2006) and has recently curated the projects *asking we walk, voices of resistance* (Den Frie Udstillingsbygning, Copenhagen, 2008), and *The Road to Mental Decolonization* (Tromsø Gallery of Contemporary Art, Norway, 2008). Merging feminist, postcolonial, anti-capitalist, and pluralist democracy theories, Nielsen's curatorial practice explores the socio-political dimension of curating and the potential of the exhibition medium to contribute to positive social change. Currently based in Copenhagen, Nielsen has held various fixed-term curatorial positions in Denmark, taught in a number of art educational programs in Scandinavia, and participated in numerous international workshops and seminars. In 2007, she was appointed Lecturer in Applied Theory at the Tromsø Academy of Fine Arts in northern Norway.

■  
Websites include:  
[www.kuratorisk-aktion.org](http://www.kuratorisk-aktion.org)  
[www.artleak.org/democracywhen](http://www.artleak.org/democracywhen),  
[www.minority-report.dk](http://www.minority-report.dk)  
[www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org](http://www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org).

MA in Visual Arts Practices has an established reputation as a distinctive, ambitious and interdisciplinary Masters of Arts programme offering pathways in art-making, criticism and curating. The programme emphasises the importance of real-world learning experience and during their time on MAVIS students extend their practice by examining a range of validating contexts within which their work is understood. A key aim of the programme is to ensure that research becomes an intentional rather than an assumed activity and students are encouraged to contextualise rather than theorise their practice. MAVIS is open to a diverse range of practices, with past and current students working in areas such as public art commissioning, performance, photography, criticism, video installation, curating and painting. The programme also provides an opportunity to develop and explore hybrid practices incorporating art-making, writing and curating. MAVIS programme team includes Amanda Ralph (Programme Co-ordinator), Maeve Connolly, Tessa Giblin and Sarah Pierce. For further information on the programme visit [www.mavis.ie](http://www.mavis.ie)

MA in Visual Arts Practices Programme  
Institute of Art, Design & Technology  
School of Creative Arts,  
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.  
[www.mavis.ie](http://www.mavis.ie)

This document is available online at  
[www.mavis.ie/curatorialsessionreader09.pdf](http://www.mavis.ie/curatorialsessionreader09.pdf)

MAVIS is grateful to all those who gave their generous permission to reproduce the contributions to this reader.

Curatorial Session: Reader—Inquiries into Curatorial Practice is published by IADT MA in Visual Arts Practices Programme and Project Press, Dublin

ISBN: 978-1-872493-27-5

Designed by Zero-G  
[www.zero-g.ie](http://www.zero-g.ie)

THANKS TO:  
Liam Doona, Helen Carey, Georgina Jackson, Sean Larkin, Niamh O'Donnell, Marian O'Sullivan, Linda Shevlin, Elena Somoza, Willie White.

