

The Future is Curatorial!

Reconceptualising curation through material culture

A dissertation
submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Museum and Heritage Studies

Reuben Schrader

2010

Abstract

Objects, though the material stuff of curating, occupy a peripheral role in curatorial theory and practice. Art and museum curating both promote relational and ideological positions that centre on certain people, excluding less prominent participants and objects alike. Although all these groups have been examined at length for their discursive qualities, their active processes are still mostly unclear. Developments in material culture theory suggest the need for re-evaluation of the relationship between objects, curators, and audiences, based on these processes. This dissertation is an attempt to construct a concept of curating that begins with objects, the circumstances in which they take part, and the effects they have on the people around them.

This investigation into the operations of people and things approaches the subject with an interdisciplinary eye, drawing upon art history, media studies, material culture studies, sociology, anthropology, and other fields. They are linked by a strongly qualitative methodology, which incorporates the researcher's own subjective experiences with a conceptual framework derived from Deleuze and Guattari and Bruno Latour. The use of a rhizomatic perspective based on movement, emergence, and opportunity opens up a series of alternative methodological and analytical approaches. With these tools, four creative works are examined and discussed as singular objects and guides to further generalisation.

The research suggests a degree of complexity and potential within objects that is rarely considered. Peoples' interactions with objects mean they share in that potential, opening up the static and structured roles previously addressed. A series of curatorial practices are derived from these findings, expanding the definition of 'curator' by allowing for the exercise of distinct curatorial functions beyond the institution. This dissertation serves as a starting point for a democratic reconceptualisation of curating, based on processes rather than end points, involving the public as curatorial agents.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, deepest thanks to my supervisors Conal McCarthy and Ian Wedde. My discussions with them always elicited new ideas and information. Their enthusiasm for the project kept it going through confusion, illness, and my own knack for biting off more than I can chew. They supported my research when it was barely formed and heading off into every possible direction, with just enough of a gentle guiding hand to save me from my own excesses.

My sincere gratitude goes to Siv and Jeremy at Enjoy, who provided the best placement a boy could hope for, and who were so generous with their time and thinking. Thanks as well to the artists who exhibited at Enjoy, and whose artworks became my test subjects. Erica, Max, and James have done so much to expand my understanding of those case studies, and thereby my research as a whole.

My classmates and my parents have provided exceptional support, curricular and extra-: thanks and love to them. Thanks also to the staff of Nikau, Katipo, Clarks, and Meow, who provided me with coffee and places to write when my own desk was being unproductive.

Finally, I owe the genesis of this dissertation to Dorothy Gambrell's *Cat and Girl*, which provided the key phrase that resonated so strongly for me, and which became a rallying point throughout my research. Also, it's a really great comic.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
<i>The process gap</i>	1
<i>The formative literature</i>	2
<i>The structure of this dissertation</i>	7
Chapter 1: Change is the constant	8
<i>Introduction</i>	8
<i>Roles</i>	8
<i>Curator</i>	9
<i>Viewer</i>	14
<i>Active objects</i>	16
<i>Inputs</i>	17
<i>Movement</i>	19
<i>Materiality</i>	20
<i>Immanence</i>	21
<i>Distributed personhood</i>	23
<i>Duplication and variation</i>	25
<i>Outputs</i>	26
<i>Emergence</i>	26
<i>Collapsing real/virtual</i>	28
<i>Decentralised objecthood</i>	29
<i>Un-blackboxing</i>	31
<i>Conclusion</i>	33
Chapter 2: There were circumstances	34
<i>Introduction</i>	34
<i>Case studies</i>	35
<i>Enjoy</i>	36
<i>Erika Sklenars – String Figure works</i>	38
<i>Max Bellamy – Microcosms</i>	41
<i>James R. Ford – A Tweet a Day</i>	43
<i>Neil Gaiman – The Sandman: Dream Country</i>	45
<i>Conclusion</i>	49
Chapter 3: This is people actively curating	50
<i>Introduction</i>	50
<i>String Figures</i>	51
<i>Microcosms</i>	53
<i>A Tweet a Day</i>	56
<i>Dream Country</i>	59
<i>Curating</i>	62
<i>Practices</i>	63
<i>Conclusion</i>	68
Conclusion: The curatorial future	69
<i>What is a curator?</i>	69
Bibliography	73



Dorothy Gambrell, 2009

Introduction

The process gap

The future is curatorial! As calls to action go it seems a little esoteric, a little limited; it's no *a spectre is haunting Europe*. Even if the future were curatorial, why would this be a big deal? Isn't curation the work of curators, themselves part of a team who put up exhibitions, visited once by some $x\%$ of the population on a fun/boring day out (depending on who you are), one of an endless array of entertainment and educational opportunities? In short, isn't curation someone else's problem? In a word, no. In the course of the next 20,000 words, my goal is to expand on that single one, to find out why curating is important, how it involves everyone, and what they do that *gets* them involved. A concept of curating developed out of its subject, the objects exhibited, offers such an opportunity.

When dealing with a research question like this, potentially so broad, and answerable by all kinds of means, one has to circumscribe the possibilities. My chosen methodology is strongly qualitative, partly to better suit my own perspective and abilities, and partly because I think it stands a better chance of providing us with findings that we can then take and apply further. I shall therefore be looking into interpretations, my own and those of others, with the hope that later quantitative research will either bear them out or supersede them productively. As I will address in more detail later, the methodology of this dissertation has a great deal in common with the methodology I discuss for understanding objects.

Museum studies is intrinsically interdisciplinary, founded in the needs of practice, drawing upon every topic and field a museum has exhibited. It has learned to examine the facts of exhibition itself, looking inwardly at the people and things that create shows, and outwardly at the people and things that

observe them. However, the ability to look into any aspect does not mean every aspect has been properly considered. A gap remains, not one of content or surface but of means, of *process*. While that which is *said* has been crossed over, through, and against, that which is *done* is still contained, directed, and cut-off. Museum and gallery objects are well understood in terms of their discursive qualities, their connotations, denotations, and sheer meaning, but through all this they lie static and inactive, constructed and construed by others. Perhaps we have not been looking in the right places for activity, perhaps the whole is greater than the sum of the parts? Perhaps the point of combination is the source of curation, whatever the object and whomever the person? From these ideas, this research is a first attempt to build an interdisciplinary practice, performed by curators and non-curators alike.

My enquiry and analysis is likewise a matter of combination and process. I want to emphasise that this is an *attempt* to develop and apply a particular method of dealing with objects. While the results are interesting, the means of getting to them are just as important, and even though I present a very different take on the role, curators' jobs are safe with me. I do not present the only way to understand curators and curating, or even an *exclusive* way: the nature of the theory and concepts used here allows for the integration of alternative perspectives and practices. A great deal of my research has been developed from Bruno Latour's work on science studies, and this dissertation is a single laboratory experiment. It is my hope that the theory and methodology will be put to the test again and again, to be refined and strengthened, and rejected where proven false.

The formative literature

An interdisciplinary approach means a simultaneous lack and flood of literature. On the one hand, few others have trod the same road, with the same mix of disciplines and perspectives, and most will have stayed within their stated disciplinary framework. On the other, once committed to seeking out and incorporating material from wherever good ideas are found, *everything* becomes relevant. Any combination of ideas, data, or analysis may have something to

offer. Brian Massumi views this as the core of the humanities' unique advantage. Through the "constant reconstellation of concepts" creative invention is possible. "Take joy in your digressions. Because that is where the unexpected arises."¹ This dissertation therefore lies at a particular intersection point of material culture, anthropology, science studies, art history, new media, professional practice, and sociology: one formulation of museum studies. The following literature is therefore not a list of prior work at this intersection, but instead acts as a street map to get us there. Other literature will be addressed in the body of this dissertation, as it is put to work.

First, I should address the literature that proved to be wrong turns, headed in unsuitable directions, or just aimless Sunday drives that unfortunately went nowhere. Early on, this research was strongly concerned with the effects of digital socialisation, and indeed with understanding 'digital' itself. Michelle Henning's work would have been an excellent opening to thinking about how we are shaped by our online experiences,² and Douglas Bagnell's insightful reminder of what digital and analogue actually mean pressed me to take a more critical look at terminology that is misapplied or divides off things that are actually connected.³ Other issues I simply couldn't find time for. An unfortunate result of the limited scope of this dissertation is the lack of any discussion of taonga. As a class of objects (in the sense the word is used throughout the text), they exemplify the material culture perspective with their combined social-personal-material reality and would have added a great deal to an already productive intersection.⁴ Similarly, Jeffrey David Feldman's description of what he calls 'the lost body problem' is still a troubling question

¹ Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (USA: Duke University Press, 2002). 17-18.

² Michelle Henning, *Museums, Media and Cultural Theory* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2006).

³ Douglas Bagnell, "What Is Digital? Concepts and a Chronology," in *The Aotearoa Digital Arts Reader*, ed. Stella Brennan and Su Ballard (New Zealand: Aotearoa Digital Arts and Clouds, 2008).

⁴ See Paul Tapsell, "The Flight of Pareraututu: An Investigation of *Taonga* from a Tribal Perspective," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 106 (1997). Conal McCarthy, "Hailing the Subject: Maori Visitors, Museum Display and the Sociology of Cultural Reception," *New Zealand Sociology* 21, no. 1 (2006).

that currently lacks an answer.⁵ Finally, although his other work is incredibly important to this dissertation, I was not able to make use of Bruno Latour's concept of 'enactment', which he developed with Peter Weibel. I still think it may hold the means by which to get beyond representation.⁶

But other literature provided the impetus for enquiry, and a sense of what is possible. The past of curated institutions raises issues of what museums and galleries owe their audiences. Richard Sandell argues that the museum is intrinsically socially and culturally active, and those spheres cannot be separated from political considerations. As cultural creators and filters, museums have perpetuated discrimination against all kinds of subaltern groups. The fact that a museum *does* have an effect upon wider society is enough justification for it, and those in it, to act positively as social agents. Furthermore, other social institutions are changing to meet the desire for equality among their publics, and Sandell says that if museums do not join them, they will be judged irrelevant and abandoned.⁷ Like Sandell, I think museums and galleries have a great deal of potential and opportunity to act in a socially responsible, responsive, way. Academic detachment has its virtues, but lends itself too easily to certain vices of control and discrimination, covering them with a structure of 'natural' and 'objective'. Curatorial theory and practice can and should contain a measure of reflexivity, with which it can understand its place and possibilities. James Clifford's accounts of Canadian institutions' experiences with indigenous populations, incorporating First Peoples' ownership of what they hold, also points to this opportunity.⁸

Nick Prior is optimistic about the capacity of 'the museum' as a reflexive institution, particularly as he sees it as something that has already changed in response to many needs and wants placed upon it. The museum has become an

⁵ Jeffrey David Feldman, "Contact Points: Museums and the Lost Body Problem," in *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden, and Ruth B. Phillips (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006).

⁶ Paul Weibel and Bruno Latour, "Experimenting with Representation: *Iconoclasm* and *Making Things Public*," in *Exhibition Experiments*, ed. Sharon MacDonald and Paul Basu (Malden: Blackwell, 2007).

⁷ Richard Sandell, *Museums, Society, Inequality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002). 3-21.

⁸ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997). 200, 213.

exemplary postmodern institution, he argues, developing from the solidly modernist place it was before. He argues against the idea that museums and galleries in the mould of the Tate Modern or Te Papa have dumbbed down for the masses. All the information is still there, but the extension of acceptable exhibition techniques allows for double-coding, the use of multiple messaging techniques to reach people with different perspectives and needs. An audience's frames of reference are just as important to a museum's curatorial authority, Prior argues, as its collection.⁹ Danielle Rice also argues that the museum is more self-aware than usually thought. She says institutions are frequently self-critical, citing the works of Hans Haacke, Daniel Buren, Andrea Fraser and others, artists who point out the limits and non-neutrality of museum spaces. Furthermore, "even the most conservative art museums offer information-filled websites, audio tours, and social evenings in an attempt to attract increasing and increasingly diverse audiences." If anything, museum professionals are more critical of themselves and their institutions than are their visitors.¹⁰

With this crack opened, what theoretical material can split it apart? Material culture studies has been finding its feet in the last decade, as it works out how to apply its findings more broadly. Coming out of commodity studies and revived anthropology, and sharing some interdisciplinary roots in visual culture studies and cultural studies more generally, materiality is increasingly viewed as an intrinsic part of experience. Commodity studies raised the idea of objects' social lives, bringing a biographical lens to bear on objects, and showing that human input to the system did not account for the complete picture.¹¹ Other strands emphasised the reciprocity and reversal of commodity flows, part of the reconfiguration of metropole and periphery. Anthropological accounts, particularly of art, stepped out of their traditional preoccupation with

⁹ Nick Prior, "Having One's Tate and Eating It: Transformations of the Museum in a Hypermodern Era," in *Art and Its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium*, ed. Andrew McClellan (Malden: Blackwell, 2003). 52-53, 65.

¹⁰ Danielle Rice, "Museums: Theory, Practice, and Illusion," in *Art and Its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium*, ed. Andrew McClellan (Malden: Blackwell, 2003). 81, 87.

¹¹ Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). 5.

‘primitive’ societies and took on board textual analysis to interrogate human/object relations around the world.¹²

As I said, objects’ meanings have been wrung out and subjected to microscopic examination. But writing within material culture studies, Daniel Miller notes the ambiguity in what we mean by ‘meaning.’ It can be the data, the basic information transmitted through whatever medium, but we often use it to refer to valuable things and ideas, that which is ‘meaning full.’ “To study the meaning of things is almost always to assume that such artefacts are ‘full’ of meaning.”¹³ He sees a flattening of importance created by a glut of available data, rendering particular choices no more valuable than others. Material culture studies have a role, then, in trying to make sense of the investments we make in all these various things. One way to site meaning is through understanding the socialisation we undergo as we interact with objects, the way they reciprocally generate our habits and classifications. Their physicality makes objects seem more natural, compared to the constructed fluidity of language, but they are just as imbued with cultural encoding.¹⁴ Lidchi agrees, saying that the “fixity of an object’s physical presence cannot deliver guarantees at a level of meaning.”¹⁵ While this would seem to disregard the semiotic focus of the last few years’ scholarship, material culture studies is not a return to modernist structures. Considering materiality and physicality is not an intellectual step back, but an expansion of the lessons learned through postmodernity. Subjectivity, indeterminacy, and a skepticism towards metanarratives are all still there. They are brought into the realm of materiality and changed by it. The change of scene allows new perspectives, but also new mechanics of operation, as seen in the latter part of chapter one. The result is a productive, generative form of postmodern thinking. If there is one thing to keep in mind through this dissertation, it is that deconstruction is matched by reconstruction.

¹² Nicholas Thomas, "Introduction," in *Beyond Aesthetics: Art and the Technologies of Enchantment*, ed. Christopher Pinney and Nicholas Thomas (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001). 1.

¹³ Daniel Miller, "Artefacts and the Meaning of Things," in *Museums in the Material World*, ed. Simon J. Knell (Oxon & New York: Routledge, 2007). 167.

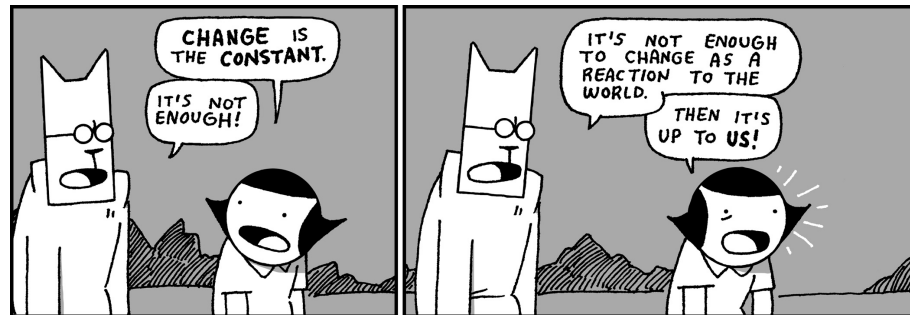
¹⁴ Ibid. 167-176.

¹⁵ Henrietta Lidchi, "The Politics and Poetic of Exhibiting Other Cultures," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage/Open University, 1997). 162.

The structure of this dissertation

This dissertation proceeds in three chapters, each a step toward a proposed interdisciplinary practice. Chapter one lays the groundwork for what follows, where I begin by considering the curatorial role and its various formulations. As none of these interpretations seem to answer my original questions about curatorial importance and engagement, I then shift perspective; what about a curatorial structure that starts from the ground up, the objects? The rest of the chapter is a toolkit of objects' qualities, derived from material culture studies and rhizomatic theory, and the development of an active, process-based perspective. Chapter two introduces my case studies, four creative works that perform the role of objects generally. This chapter is mainly concerned with providing a comprehensive picture of each case, to set the reader up with the best analogue to my own experience and impressions of the objects. In chapter three I apply the previous material, returning to now analyse chapter two's cases in light of chapter one's concepts and processes. Once the cases' qualities have been unfolded, we have a way to explore curating again, now derived from the objects that make it the unique practice it is. In my conclusion I finish by returning to roles, proposing my own version of an institutional curator that contrasts heavily with those presented in chapter one.

Chapter 1: Change is the constant



“Change”, Dorothy Gambrell, <http://catandgirl.com/?p=342>. Reproduced under a Creative Commons licence.

Introduction

To recreate the curator, we have several stages to work through. First up, we will see what form the role takes within the literature. This is more than the tasks performed in the course of the job; instead, the roles (plural) are determined by a broad range of philosophical and political positions. Without asserting a comprehensive rejection of these roles, they are a starting point and something to build a case in opposition to. But before I discuss an alternative, the groundwork must be laid. The second part of this chapter provides the terms and definitions needed to re-examine curation, building up from principles relating to objects. Through a discussion of ideas derived from material culture theory, several conceptual groupings will be presented, focusing around the *process* of objecthood. The ways that objects change, within themselves and in their engagements with people, is the core of this alternative formulation. Once that has been done, we will be able to look at objects in a new light, and from there, curating.

Roles

In the literature and the field of practice, those involved in the lives of objects have several roles they can choose from. Although not many would hew too closely to just one model of behaviour at all times, preferring to address a

particular situation's needs as they arise, there are noticeable emphases that guide these choices. I want to spend some time on accepted roles, to show what is already allowable, and also what is not. In the sections below, curators and viewers are discussed, while artists are noticeably absent. This is not due to any conviction that the author, or artist, is dead; I believe the artist is very much alive, influential, and productive. But this is not an art history thesis, it is an inquiry into the curation of objects generally, and while I make reference to several artworks I want to emphasise their objecthood first and foremost. What I cover in this research should be considered applicable to objects generally, and statements regarding artists should be understood equally to apply to producers. Obviously, artists are a particular set of subsets, and it is unfortunate that there is not space to cover their circumstances adequately, but the principles laid out later in this chapter could be helpful in generating that material.

Curator

Galleries and museums seem to look at curation very differently. While in art history and theory curation is constantly theorised, scrutinised, and remodeled, in museum studies it is usually approached implicitly, and has to be drawn out of the broader texts. Curating is of course a practice, and trying to divine a 'real purpose' can mean missing the practicalities of interpreting objects and creating exhibitions that make up so much of the role. Analyses of curating often start by performing exegesis on the Latin root of the word, but as Kate Fowle notes, it is more productive to look at its historical *use*, particularly the relationship between care and control.¹⁶ Through the years and centuries, there have been several underlying premises to the varied ways in which curators do their work, and these impact on both the practice and the result.

The literature on art curation is very active, attempting to work out the proper relationship between the curator, the artist, the artwork, and the viewer, although the last can sometimes be lost in the mix. Critical is the balance of power, and whether the power of the curator is legitimate or usurped from the

¹⁶ Kate Fowle, "Who Cares? Understanding the Role of the Curator Today," in *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating*, ed. Steven Rand and Heather Kouris (New York: apexart, 2007). 26.

artist. This question has been answered in varying degrees, summarised by Bruce Phillips as caretaker and priest, facilitator, and exhibition-maker.¹⁷

Caretaker and priest is the traditional position of the curator, and it still reflects how curators are widely seen today. This is the curator who 'makes culture', who through their expertise delineates high and low art, by whose voice the canon is generated. Fowle's analysis extends Foucault's ideas about discipline from mental institutions to museums, arguing that much of The Museum's historic operation has been the administration and governance of culture, at least as much as its exercise of preservation and presentation.¹⁸ I may be more charitable than Foucault, but I also see a flipside to this role. *Expertise* is not a pejorative, after all, and though knowledge and connoisseurship may be hoarded, it may also be shared. The caretaker/priest also has the ability, backed by their institution, to experiment with objects and artworks without interference, perhaps discovering something new. This role is then double-edged, able to concentrate and then expand understanding, but relying on the individual (and the system within which they operate) to let that happen. It is a curation of control and closed doors, but also of deep thinking and the opportunities that power affords.

The facilitator is an adjunct to the artist's power. They create opportunities for the artist, and organise, manage, and develop a productive relationship with them. The artist and the curator have a greater or lesser degree of interaction depending on their mutual agreement, which can allow for the latter's expertise. In this role, the curator "shares, rather than represents, authority".¹⁹ This curator fills what gaps are left by the challenging artistic practices from the 1950s onwards, the product of artists who sought to reverse the usual power dynamic. Some decided to operate outside the usual institutions, while others changed them from inside. Many of these curators are artists themselves, working in a way they see as supportive of their own practice.²⁰

¹⁷ Bruce Phillips, "Revised Thesis Proposal," (Wellington: Victoria University, 2009). 12-20.

¹⁸ Fowle, "Who Cares? Understanding the Role of the Curator Today." 26.

¹⁹ Trudy Nicks, ed. *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003). 25.

²⁰ Melanie Hogg, *Enjoy Five Year Retrospective Catalogue* (Wellington: Enjoy Trust, 2005).

The exhibition-maker should be distinguished from the idea that the curator is an artist in their own right, though it is a creative position. Rather, it is meant to invoke the work done by a film director, particularly the *auteur* who came out of 1950s Hollywood in response to the attention given to stars and studio heads. Hoffman analogises the two kinds of creator by stressing their thematic consistency and strong interpretive sensibility, as well as the way they develop from project to project.²¹ The exhibition-maker draws on a wide body of knowledge and range of techniques, and though they direct a large number of people throughout the process, they retain 'final cut'. They differ from a caretaker/priest by what they offer their audiences. While the latter presents the great works, with an implicit backing of art history (which they have helped create and sustain), the former presents a 'meaning-making experience', in which works support a narrative. Depending on the curator, this may mean a great deal of collaboration with the artist, or none at all. It is a role with wide-open possibilities, because it is about directing the contributions of others, not who those others will be.

As mentioned, museum curating has usually been under-theorised compared to its arty cousin, but a picture can be gleaned from the analytical structure of the main texts of museum studies. Like Fowle, Tony Bennett dissects museum along Foucauldian lines, comparing their institutional power to that of prisons and hospitals, operating through exhibition instead of incarceration. Museums, he argues, were to encourage order through self-surveillance, and so the curator had to generate exhibitionary structures that functioned to this end.²² The curator's role was to create an ideal model of behaviour: not necessarily attainable, but real enough that people could strive for it. This curator is an enforcer, subject to the power of the institution and the mores being handed down. They do not have a lot of agency, and the lack of feedback from their audience means they cannot judge their own effectiveness. Though the idea contains a lot of truth, it faces the common problem of over-totalising Foucault.

²¹ Jens Hoffman, "A Certain Tendency of Curating," in *Curating Subjects*, ed. Paul O'Neill (London: Open Editions, 2007). 138

²² Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1994). 59-64

Under such strict control, there is no theoretical space for *any* freedom, of action or thought. Aside from the hopelessness of such a position, it does not account for all the observable points of difference and dissent, or the productive capacity of those outside the regulating authorities.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett regards museums as destinations, providing their value as “nodes in a network of attractions that form the recreational geography of a region.” The curator at this museum has to create experiences for tourists who have travelled, and experience *of* travel for those who have not. Their work is in service to alterity, giving visitors something new and different.²³

‘Destination curation’ demands the placement of objects within narratives and landscapes, making the curator a storyteller and advocate for exhibited cultural values. This seems like a powerful position, but the curator is still in service to other needs, in this case the need for regional tourism, which shapes the stories told and what audiences are expected to care about. It also gives the impression that the highest service a museum can aspire to is, being blunt, a tourist trap; a place of endless consumption for which the curator must ever produce. The curator cannot engage with their audiences except as customers, making it a role of limited learning and reflexivity.

Current museum practice is heavily influenced by destination culture and by the New Museology, a grouping of theory and practice that has done a lot to invert the power structures of museum and gallery institutions. The New Museology sought the exposure and dissolution of institutional power, preferring to elevate the visitor in a way that strongly impacted on roles like that of the curator. Nick Merriman’s contribution to the movement’s eponymous text was a strongly quantitative exercise in rebalancing the museum experience towards visitors; here, curating is still an ideological activity, performing as one of many components that have historically made museums more exclusionary.²⁴ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill sees more potential for the individual museum staff, arguing

²³ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998). 132-141.

²⁴ Nick Merriman, "Museum Visiting as a Cultural Phenomenon," in *The New Museology*, ed. Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion Books, 1989).

that the visitor focus can allow the development of new professional skills and the appropriate reallocation of resources.²⁵

However, this creates a zero-sum game, with more autonomy for the public resulting in less for curators, or at least, less concern for their role. By deconstructing the curator's institutional (and significantly, historical) power, everything is read in terms of the control curators exercise over others. In the interest of inverting power relations and breaking down systems, the old way is done away with. This empty space is filled by the prioritisation of the visitor. In the section below on viewers, I will discuss some of the problems this causes.

There are other sources that describe curating situationally, outside the previously mentioned bounds. UCLA's *Digital Humanities Manifesto* is perhaps more evolutionary than its title would like, but it does stretch the curatorial role academically. This curator operates with a skill set geared to handle the flood of information available through the internet; sorting, organising, and prioritising for the sake of others. However, it does maintain a very hierarchical structure: there is the curator, and there are the people who are not the curator.²⁶ This emphasis can be read as a reaction to the idea that the Internet means total democracy of opinions, with every participant doing their own totally subjective thing. Ultimately, the document belies the theme of democracy that runs through much of its rhetoric.

Though it says many of the same things, Elizabeth Schlatter's recent round-up of curatorial opinions talks about them in more balanced terms. While acknowledging the productive activity of audiences has been affected and enhanced by the Internet, "it has also engendered the need for knowledge experts to parse out the best and most relevant online content for various needs." Steve Rubel posits a digital curator, "people who can separate art from junk and package [it] in creative ways. Historically, this has been in a museum

²⁵ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, "Studying Visitors," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon MacDonald (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006). 362.

²⁶ "The Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0," UCLA, <http://dev.cdlib.org/digitalhumanities/2009/05/29/the-digital-humanities-manifesto-20/>.

context, but today it's broader." Content experts could come from many areas outside the historical centres. Schlatter also quotes Nancy Villa Bryk on the changes in museums, under which curators were expected to share their traditional responsibilities with other staff. Villa Bryk argues that while those traditional aspects *were* the job before, being a curator is "so much more now."²⁷ This suggests that those doing the job are adaptable, and that their unique skills are transferable to new areas. In this case, part of the role is to *change* the role as needed, an idea noticeably missing from the other perspectives. However, there is still a line drawn between the curator and the audience.

Viewer

Most models of curation are implicitly models of viewing as well, as they lay out a role for the viewer or visitor that is commonly opposed to that of the curator. The viewer, the visitor, has for a long time held one very strongly entrenched role, that of the passive recipient. This has been quite effectively challenged in more recent years, but the traditional understanding still holds a great deal of sway. It's easy to see why it retains its power; the ubiquity of mass media makes it seem unstoppable. But while it can be implicated in a lot of real, serious problems, viewers have proven perfectly able to change, subvert, or ignore its supposedly monolithic message.

As mentioned, the ability (and power) of the audience has been incorporated into today's museology, gaining a lot of ground in the late 20th century and still informing practice in major institutions around the world. The visitor experience is paramount, and guides management, collection policy, curation and exhibition development, marketing, and education. Martin Hall sees in this focus the formation of another superstructure, like the discursive formulation that generates/generated the exhibitionary complex analysed by Tony Bennett.²⁸ Arguing that the economic and social conditions of the mid to late 19th century are no longer in effect, Hall suggests that museums today are

²⁷ N. Elizabeth Schlatter, "A New Spin: Are Djs, Rappers and Bloggers 'Curators'?", *Museum* (2010).

²⁸ As we recall, the public museum as an institution that guided the behaviour and thinking of its audience, by providing a model of correctness and by delimiting the bounds of the rational world.

shaped by service and experience, not industrial, economies.²⁹ In this analysis, visitors are consumers (of a postmodern stripe) primarily and entirely. They come to experience, not just to spectate, and certainly not to produce. As in Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblet's work, museums attract visitors by becoming destinations: the visitor is instrumentalised as an economic actor who is to be provided with a codified combination of narrative, difference from 'regular life', and merchandise.

This creates a situation rich in anteriority, which I will talk more about below (see *Immanence*), but it also returns visitors to a very passive situation. Although Hall says the postmodern museum can be whatever visitors want it to be, without limitation,³⁰ the institutional role of *destination* is actually very limiting for all involved. Hall keeps saying that with destination culture the individual is drawn out of the undifferentiated mass, which is meant to bring the focus onto the individual, their needs, and so cater to them. But ultimately this is not the response of an institution to a singular person: it's the creation of an empty vessel called 'the individual', which is then grouped into predetermined marketable categories. The signified is collapsed into the signifier, leaving the actual person involved out in the cold. Possibly contrary to Hall's intention, each player thereby exists in a power hierarchy. To counteract late capitalism's loss of referentiality, 'authentic' objects solidify the world to the degree that it is commodifiable. They are tools used by the institution to maintain themselves through a period of crisis. And in turn, so are the visitors.

What all these varied roles have in common is the way they place people on an axis of producer-presenter-consumer. While an individual might be able to operate as more than one of these (an artist who buys others' works, for example), they cannot be more than one at a time. These roles would say that when one acts as a consumer, one is not producing. When one produces, one is not presenting. The rest of this chapter is primarily meant to refigure objects to

²⁹ Martin Hall, "The Reappearance of the Authentic," in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, ed. Ivan Karp, et al. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006). 76-77.

³⁰ Ibid. 81.

place them in fluid, changing relationships; it also gives the means to show the fluidity of the *people* in those relationships.

Active objects

Curators and viewers have been accorded varying amounts of agency, depending on the guiding theory and practice. Objects themselves are only beginning to be thought of as agents in their own right, but doing so has substantial effects upon the other players. Gosden and Knowles say objects must be fully embedded in social relations. They are processes of production and use, rather than static entities, and so change as their context changes. However, they are not active in themselves.³¹ For Janet Hoskins, objects are given gender, name, history, function – their agency is a function of their malleability. People insert their intentions into the things they make, whereby they are held over until experienced by another subject. In this way, a person may be present, even when they are not.³²

Alfred Gell has looked at agency in detail. Key is his placement of the idea *in between* entities. He substitutes ‘actants’ for ‘actors’, replacing individual conscious action-takers with inter-reliant networked nodes. Each actant exists in relation to many others, and agency occurs when they connect. Gell elaborates with his example of Pol Pot’s soldiers and their landmines. Years after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, people are still being killed and maimed by the mines left around the countryside during their rule. The landmine is not itself the agent, as it has to be placed (and triggered) by a person. Neither is the soldier, as they are not around any more to harm the victim. Each alone is not able to act, but through the relationship of one to the other, the event occurs. Objects do not initiate action through force of will, “but they are objective embodiments of the *power or capacity to will their use*”.³³

³¹ Chris Gosden and Chantal Knowles, *Collecting Colonialism* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2001). 167-169.

³² Janet Hoskins, "Agency, Biography and Objects," in *Sage Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Chris Tilley, et al. (London: Sage Publications, 2006). 74-75.

³³ Alfred Gell, *Art and Anthropology: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). 21.

This kind of agency has a lot to do with distributed personhood (discussed below), and fits into an expansive interpretation of life based on systems, rather than boundaries. If objects are participants in broader systems, acting with similar qualities as people, then why are they usually isolated from those systems? Perhaps there are qualities and characteristics that the curator, visitor, and object share, giving them all a role. In generating a role for an object there are several concepts that are useful, some that set the stage, and some that describe what plays out upon it. In short, though I repeatedly write about objects in what follow, please remember that I am also writing about people.

Inputs

There are a several conceptual groupings – calling them models is not really accurate – that feed into the way I shall be considering my case studies. These are the ideas that describe the ways objects function as processes; they provide the how and why. Generally, these concepts are also productive as alternative perspectives, to be used when and where they prove to be more helpful than the conventional wisdom. Each relates to the others in various ways, more or less explicitly depending on the situation. The way they draw together (and apart) is explained by a theoretical reconfiguration by Deleuze and Guattari.

Theoretical models usually describe or generate superstructures. Rather than work from the assumption that overarching structures mould the situation like Platonic ideals, I see these concepts arising and operating as rhizomes. Deleuze and Guattari introduced this idea in *A Thousand Plateaus*, deliberately contrasting the rhizome to the ‘world-tree’ of classical philosophy, through which (Western/global) thought has grown up, branching off yet unified. Alternatively,

A rhizome as subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicals. Bulbs and tubers are rhizomes... Rats are rhizomes. Burrows are too, in all their functions of shelter, supply, movement, evasion, and breakout. The rhizome itself

assumes very diverse forms... The rhizome includes the best and the worst: potato and couchgrass, or the weed.³⁴

Deleuze and Guattari make note of several salient features. A rhizome can and must be connected to other things at each of its own points. It does not move or grow teleologically, or stay within its original bounds: establishing further connections is what it *does*. There is no centre, no closed-off source, no unity. There is no such thing as divisibility, and because of this it is multiple: “A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature.”³⁵ They are utterly active, dynamic, and participatory. They are also, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest at the end of the previous blockquote, value-neutral: describing the objects, people, and relationships I cover in this text as rhizomes does not imply a judgment. Process is process, and it is our own interactions within those interactions that determine their value.

Talking about rhizomes brings certain aspects more clearly into relief. It is a perspective that develops from the ground up, where something can be seen happening in several places – within several groups, processes, artworks and so on – because of shared (almost atomic) characteristics, instead of an imposed order laid down from on high. Along these lines, rhizomatic perspectives are more interested in the potential of a thing, making for a less deterministic analysis – the simple fact of a thing’s ability to be other than what it is *now* is given weight and value. This gives us what I think is the most important aspect: every new case must therefore be worked out on its own terms, rather than slotted into pre-existing categories. Every exchange, including analysis, must be a negotiation. The following concepts are meant to guide my analysis to an eventual (and intellectually-honest-inconclusive) result, *not* dictate the terms of right and wrong interpretation.

³⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2004). 7.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 7-9.

Movement

Considering movement, and thinking of things in terms of their movement, gets us past one major analytical hurdle. Usually we think of things in very static ways; we halt a person, object, or idea at a particular point and then dissect it. In terms of analysing people, Massumi suggests that The Body, a thing that feels and moves, is usually reduced to being an expression of The Subject, which is generated by culture and discourse and the like. These are constructive processes that have no room for that which is outside their realm, such as affect or transition. The body as a unit of analysis is laid out on a cartographic (and oppositional) framework, whereby the subject can be defined. But by positioning in this way, the body is (as implied) only mapped onto an existing ideological master structure. In doing this, Massumi says, the potential for change itself has disappeared.³⁶

The answer is not just to add movement as a further dimension, because movement cannot be reduced to start and end points, to vectors. This is displacement, not transformation, and not indicative of the *character* that is held in movement. The arrow of Zeno's paradox illustrates this:

When Zeno shoots his philosophical arrow, he thinks of its flight path in the commonsense way, as a linear trajectory made up of a sequence of points or positions that the arrow occupies one after the other. The problem is that between one point on a line and the next, there is an infinity of intervening points. If the arrow occupies a first point along its path, it will never reach the next – unless it occupies each of the infinity of points between. Of course, it is the nature of infinity that you can never get to the end of it. The arrow gets swallowed up in the transitional infinity. Its flight path implodes. The arrow is immobilized.

Or, if the arrow moved it is because it was never *in* any point. It was in *passage* across them all. The transition from bow to target is not decomposable into constituent points. A path is not composed of positions. It is nondecomposable: a dynamic unity.³⁷

³⁶ Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*. 2-3.

³⁷ Ibid. 6.

So, a thing's movement is part of its character – an arrow that has stopped by hitting its target is still an arrow, but it is now a successfully shot one. Its nature thereby cannot be essential; its nature must be modification. Incorporating movement is one of the most evocative ways of showing a thing's capacity for difference while being the same. That a thing is modifiable means that, across time, it has potential. That means both considering what will likely happen to it, and remembering that the thing incorporates (/embodies) that possibility. Aside from where else that idea can take us, it is worth having in our analytical toolbox, to remind us that the thing now is not the thing back then, or the thing yet to come.

Since movement cannot be added to positionality (as positionality is intrinsically static), movement has to come first, and be at the forefront of thinking about analysed cases. Looking into the processes that surround and make up the case does this. Processes can include the manufacture of a thing (design, sourcing of material, fabrication, marketing) and the lifetime of a thing (transport, engagement with users/viewers, decay). What follows here can be read as several sets of processes, with an eye to time-based existence and potential.

Materiality

Material culture studies places materiality on a par with linguistic, social, temporal, spatial, economic, and representational experience. It intersects with and transcends these, forming an interdisciplinary 'non-discipline.' The possibilities are as broad as this suggests, allowing interactions with the subject and object, the macro and micro, the rare and common, the simple and complex.³⁸ The ubiquity of examples is the *point* of thinking in this way, revealing a type of experience and existence that has been mislaid by purely linguistic analysis.³⁹

Materiality is distinct from physicality, although the two often intersect. It can be summed up as the stuff that makes up a thing; broadly applied, this does not

³⁸ Chris Tilley et al., eds., *Sage Handbook of Material Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 2006). 1-4.

³⁹ Miller, "Artefacts and the Meaning of Things." 173.

just mean the metal of a key or the flax of a basket. It refers to the processes in which these materials have a part. In the case of the basket, its materiality includes the plants it is made from, the harvesting and preparing process, and qualities of the flax, such as tensile strength, that influence the final shape.⁴⁰ Materiality is therefore (in part) an alternative to the idea that an interaction between a person and a thing is one-sided, the imposition of will onto matter.

This influence that materiality exerts can be seen in the socialising effects objects have upon people. Particularly in early childhood, objects source and reify certain relationships, developing language and participating in the budding sense of self.⁴¹ This early socialisation continues to affect us through life, as we pursue the replication of those early connections.⁴² The ‘stuff’ of objects, and the processes that draw that stuff into interactions with people, go a long way to determining the outcomes of any given engagement.

Immanence

Movement involves thinking about an object’s trajectories, histories, and potential, but that does not preclude the appreciation of the moment or deny the power of a temporary engagement. Immanence is the ‘here and now’ of interaction between things, not stripped of history but not deterministically ruled by it either. Immanence is an alternative to anteriority, the imposition of the past on the present. Amanda Wayers has written about the two concepts as they relate to art and says that anteriority “pre-empts and circumvents the work’s ‘newness’, its difference from anything that has come before, by emphasising the same.” Immanence allows for “an understanding that unique artworks engage uniquely with unique viewers”.⁴³ Both the objects and the viewers are defined circumstantially. Immanence is time-based. It is immediate,

⁴⁰ Julian Thomas, "Phenomenology and Material Culture," in *Sage Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Chris Tilley, et al. (London: Sage Publications, 2006).

⁴¹ Chris Tilley, "Objectification," in *Sage Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Chris Tilley, et al. (London: Sage Publications, 2006).

⁴² Ian Woodward, "Theorising the Object-Seeking Social Actor: Object Transitioning, Sensual Practice and the Unfolding Materiality of Social Life," in *A Material Turn? Multi-disciplinary explorations* (Massey University: Wellington, 2009).

⁴³ Amanda Wayers, "Models, Modes and Exhibitionary Practices: From Anteriority to Immanence in Exhibition Development" (Victoria University of Wellington, 2007). 1.

unmediated, and thus escapes what has already been done and said. The variances it causes carry over from the affective into the semantic: immanent experience results in shifted and shifting meanings. It is a fully subjective concept that discourages fixed interpretation, and so makes space for alternatives and change over time.

Umberto Eco discusses this in relation to literary ideas of the death of the author and reader response. Although a work can be read in whatever way the reader chooses, Eco argues that there can still be 'good' and 'bad' readings. While the author may no longer claim total control of their work, readers ought to have respect for the intention of the text itself. The hermeticism of reader-only interpretation is an unstable house of cards that requires further and further 'discovery': any settled meaning becomes suspect by its own settling, and must be a façade for something deeper. If the work is allowed to contribute, its purpose (the production of an ideal reader, according to Eco) combines with the reader's purpose of producing an ideal author. A relationship is set up between the work and the reader, through which experience occurs.⁴⁴ This concept is clearly applicable to creative works that have deliberate and crafted semiotic content, but it expands to any engagement; with art objects it helpfully foregrounds affective elements, and for objects generally it is critical for recognition of distributed agency and attempts to un-blackbox things (see below).

Art exists within a phenomenal superstructure of art history, theory, and criticism. It has become exceedingly difficult to approach works without the decades of discourse weighing upon the experience; many people *avoid* art because they think they need years of training to make anything of it. Exhibition curation is commonly the placement of work within one of art history's existing narratives, so the story is already told by the time the visitor arrives: anteriority. Even though the immanent moment contains and generates so much information and experience, it is easily overwritten by what has gone before, because those

⁴⁴ Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). 30-33, 49, 64.

narratives are established, easy, and prioritised by institutional structures and the deference given to certain roles.

When immanence is recognised, however, the door is opened to experience that is not reducible to linguistic markers. Many works have affective effects as their goal, in whole or in part, and personal experience of affect is one reason people care so much about particular works. Yayoi Kusama's Day and Night (Dots) rooms, seen in 2009 at Wellington's City Gallery, generate very different feelings by reversing the application of just two colours and marginally shifting the scale used. Notably, although those feelings are usually opposed positive/negative, they are not applied uniformly: some find the Day room heartening, the Night room oppressive, others find the Night room soothing, and the day room harsh.⁴⁵ Affect is not limited to the realm of artworks: our engagement with objects generally relies on affective elements. Bille and Sørensen have suggested an entire anthropology of luminosity based on light's influence, which ranges from the guiding power of light shafts in subway navigation to the role of a particular kind of warm interior lighting in practising the Danish concept of *hygge* (cosiness).⁴⁶

Distributed personhood

This concept stems from the decentred concept of agency discussed above, and gets to the heart of treating objects, and people, as linked networks in their own right. Latour argues that an action is not performed by agent A or agent B, but that the performance of the action is an event that creates the new agent, C. This combination can do things neither could alone, and is summed up as a response to the ideas that either guns or people kill people. Rather, Latour says, "You are different with a gun in your hand; the gun is different with you holding it. You are another subject because you hold the gun; the gun is another object because it has entered into a relationship with you." To presume a principal

⁴⁵ This observation came from my informal conversations with visitors during my time as a gallery host.

⁴⁶ Mikkel Bille and Tim Flohr Sørensen, "An Anthropology of Luminosity: The Agency of Light," *Journal of Material Culture* 12 (2007). 275-280.

quality or essence of either subject or object is a mistake; each is changed and each is critical. A person that shoots a gun is a person/gun for that moment.⁴⁷

Dynamism is clearly the key here. Latour provides a mechanism that gets past a major problem with deterministic structure: the irreducible complexity and variability of the world, and all the things that make it up. There is too much going on at any one point, in too many directions, to realistically say that the elements involved are going to be replicated again later in the same ways.

Change and reconstitution at each juncture becomes understandable, acting as the rule, rather than some exception that has to be swept under the rug. This is not to say that there cannot be similarities, or that the variances may be unimportant in a given situation, but they are there nonetheless.

Distributed personhood provides the means to cross types of networks. For example, with this concept we can identify continuous experiences across type, and see where and how 'physical' networks elide into 'virtual' ones. Though it might seem a recipe for chaos, it emphasises the need for networked thinking, and provides the means to draw together different types of networks. Lefebvre provides a spatial delineation based on operations and processes, described as "the *perceived* space of materialized Spatial Practice; the *conceived* space... defined as Representations of Space; and the *lived* Spaces of Interpretation."⁴⁸ The latter is the encounter of the first two spaces: simply put, it's where things and ideas *happen*. In this formulation, similarities and parallels are more obvious, and differences can be accommodated more easily, especially as they may become similarities to something else, down the line. At the further end of this idea, Knappett discusses the ways in which a human embodies their own distributed personhood through the mixing of kinds of networks,⁴⁹ but even without going that far, it is easy to see how perceptible and conceivable reality interacts: chapter three's discussion of my cases provides many examples.

⁴⁷ Bruno Latour, "On Technical Mediation - Philosophy, Sociology, Genealogy," *Common Knowledge* 3, no. 2 (1994). 32-33.

⁴⁸ In Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996). 10.

⁴⁹ Carl Knappett, *Thinking through Material Culture: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2005). 19-24

Duplication and variation

Duplication and variation are fairly self-explanatory when discussing objects. If a thing is made several times, it is duplicated, and if it is altered in the process, it is varied. But even these simple terms hide a great deal of detail, and they work together in all kinds of interesting ways. Objects made to be identical, while distinguished by their particular physical existence (and that is not being disputed), participate in each other's ontological state. A counterfeit relies on an original, a reprint on a print, a compilation on a collection of sources, a production model on a prototype. In many cases it is difficult to say which is the definitive object, and in fact it would be doing a disservice to the other appearances to say they were lesser.

These qualities are usually thought of as the creations of mass production, and especially today as creations of the digital world. But examples can be found by looking broader and deeper. Monasteries used to be full of monks copying manuscripts, and sympathetic magic is based on the idea of recreating the target of the spell. However, the most obvious area of relevance is also the area that provides us with the examples and information we need. It is worth looking further at new media. Discussing its use in museum displays, Ann Mintz notes that new media allows multilingual presentations, accessible content for those with disabilities, and a range of perspectives to match or contrast those of the visitors.⁵⁰ In these and other ways, duplication and variation are core to new media objects' use.

The root of this capacity lies in what Manovich considers the defining characteristic of new media. Rather than being 'digital' or based on interactivity, he instead points to the database, a source that can feed many interfaces. This makes a 'piece' of new media highly variable, in contrast to mass media's thousands of identical copies.⁵¹ From a database then, an interested party may select the data they want, and present it as they choose in a unique and

⁵⁰ Ann Mintz, "Media and Museums: A Museum Perspective," in *The Virtual and the Real: Media in the Museum*, ed. Selma Thomas and Ann Mintz (Washington: American Association of Museums, 1998). 21-26.

⁵¹ Henning, *Museums, Media and Cultural Theory*. 39.

customised user interface. While it is therefore difficult to *exhibit* new media,⁵² databases offer two major things: that there is a class of objects explicitly geared to work in a networked fashion, and that people are increasingly *used* to objects behaving variably.

Ultimately, even referencing and appropriation fall into this conceptual grouping. A great deal of (or even all) creative endeavour draws on what has gone before or alongside. It duplicates the part required and varies it accordingly, by modulation or synthesis. This is the justification for the concept of public domain, and the idea (originally, at least) that copyright had a limited life. Because no work is generated in a vacuum, even creators have a limited claim to their creations, and consequently only have a certain amount of time to capitalise on their creation before it reverts to the public at large, ready for duplication and variation.

Outputs

The outputs are the results of the above inputs. They are what happen *because* objects function in the ways described. Each concept is the focus of one of my cases in chapter two, but they interrelate depending (again) on circumstance.

Emergence

The developed emphasis on change and variability finds expression in emergence, the idea that something new happens with each engagement. Emergent play involves accepting and using a rule set for unintended results, as when a space shooter is turned into a hockey game.⁵³ Latour's person with a gun involves the (temporary, transitory) creation of a new being, but there are also new sensations, new meanings, and new potential constantly occurring, and each of these is dependent on the generative elements that create them: emergence is, again, subjective. Although it relates to synthesis, emergence goes further than the resolution of differences; in fact, it does not involve resolution

⁵² Ibid. 25.

⁵³ Sela Davis, "Designing for Emergent Gameplay and Narrative," in *GamesPlusBlog* (2010).

at all, because that would mean the question is answered, the matter is settled.⁵⁴ Furthermore, synthesis suggests the integration of parts, without the addition of further information/material. While emergence relies entirely on the interaction of parts, the process itself forms something new. This may be the most important of the four outputs, as it describes in the most fundamental way the operations of interaction. Indeed, it describes *output*.

While subjective, these engagements are not just isolated exercises in solipsism, as they are buttressed by those around them, such as conversation between two viewers of a work, or on a larger scale art historical dialogue. Agreements reinforce interpretations, and disagreements spark further emergences. As with Eco's idea of the intent of the work, emergence is somewhat guided by the tendency of components to react in particular ways, making some results more likely than others, and existing socialisation does the same. In these ways emergence allows for the building of shared experience and the continuous development of further meaning and experience.

A lot of what we have covered so far has been to establish the extensive and interreliant nature of networks. Emergence extends their capacity for dynamism, so that instead of just developing new links between nodes of the network, new *nodes* are generated. In an exhibition, such a node could be an interpretation developed from the past experience of the viewer coupled with the specifics of an exhibited object. The Museum of Wellington, and its past as the city's Maritime Museum, illustrates this well. The current museum's exhibitions are in line with contemporary practice, being strongly narrative and illustrative, contrasting with the previous incarnation's large and generally interpretation-free collection of model ships and maritime artefacts. A common complaint faced by the museum is that many of these objects are now missing, and that the museum is lesser for it, but those who want the objects back are actually after their *emergent experiences*. That particular audience has a wealth of personal maritime history and knowledge, which provided them with the means to engage with the exhibited objects and form a node of personal meaning,

⁵⁴ This doesn't discount the further reaction of another party against the given answer, but by that point we're asking *another* question.

nostalgia, and comprehension. Other audiences, whose knowledge is in other areas, may never generate that kind of node, hence the current provision of interpretation.

Collapsing real/virtual

There is a strong tendency to oppose computers with the rest of the world; to declare that what happens on and in the former is not quite as real as the latter. In museum literature, writing on technology noticeably decouples *virtual* and *real*. For example, Selma Thomas contrasts the qualities of ‘technology’ (implicitly digital technology) to the ‘resonance’ and ‘authority’ of an artefact. Here, technology is by definition immaterial, and so can’t play to the parts of a human that respond to materiality.⁵⁵ But there are two problems with this perspective: as I have mentioned, materiality is not the same as physicality, and even the most ‘digital’ technology is based on real (physical *and* material) components.⁵⁶

Julian Priest traces through the layers of the Internet, exposing the various networks and rooting them in the stuff of reality. He runs through protocols like http, smtp and pop, to ip addresses and dns, to local area networks, to the physical layer that defines the encoding of data into a signal that can be transmitted. At each step, signals are carried by constructions of metal and plastic: computers, cables, switches, local loops, and undersea cables. The Internet in New Zealand provides an excellent example of technology’s reliance

⁵⁵ Selma Thomas and Ann Mintz, eds., *The Virtual and the Real: Media in the Museum* (Washington: American Association of Museums, 1998). 3-5, 10-16.

⁵⁶ While much of the resistance to allowing for the reality of technology is to do with the way technologies represent other things, I think it also has to do with how they *simulate* them. Through most of computing history, the limitations of the technology have meant that attempts to recreate a thing have had to work with a substantial amount of abstraction. At the most intensive, this operates at the core of computing itself: the replacement of everything else with strings of instructions and numbers, from compiled code to binary on/off switches. But it’s also shown in the compression of digitised and digital photos that show jpeg artefacts, and the uncanny valley effect that prevents even high-quality CG humans from appearing ‘really real’. Interestingly, these abstractions are again reappearing, in mobile devices with limited processing power, and through nostalgic/aesthetic appreciation of 8-bit art and music: an affective and material interaction.

on the real world, as we are bottlenecked here by the sole Southern Cross cable loop. Cut one (very large) real link, and the virtual disappears.⁵⁷

Helpfully, there is another way of addressing the issue. Massumi, working from Deleuze and Guattari, chooses to make virtual a subset of real, instead of an antonym. Virtual is “real, but abstract.” Abstract is that which is never positioned, but only occurs in passing, a material incorporeality. We are able to do this because materiality and physicality have been distinguished, and movement has been presented as a valid state of being. By allowing for the reality of both the real and the virtual, we can step outside the pre-determined limits of positionality and start looking at tendency and potential movement.⁵⁸ By collapsing virtual into real, types of networks can be ‘the same, but different.’ Furthermore, Ryan argues that the connotation of ‘virtual’ as fake or fictional does not hold up, and should be replaced with an idea of virtual-as-potential. Virtualisation is a process of creative abstraction, paired in a mutually constructive relationship with actualisation. She considers it a fundamental human practice, the posing and answering of the question: “to what new problems can I apply this available resource?”⁵⁹

Decentralised objecthood

Drawing on the previous section, we can say that an object can partake of all the aspects of ‘objecthood’ without a unified physical presence. It does not need a cohesive physical ‘place’ that can be viewed in its entirety by a single viewer. Even though such an object may have a physicality entirely made up of computers, cables, and switches, its specific mass has little to do with how it may be understood. That an object may be duplicated and varied (see below) shows how little concreteness it needs to have, and the Internet provides many examples of ‘non-physical’ objects. It is a fertile ground for forms of artwork, such as art games and hypertext fiction. While of course these objects have

⁵⁷ Julian Priest, “Internet; Environment,” in *The Aotearoa Digital Arts Reader*, ed. Stella Brennan and Su Ballard (New Zealand: Aotearoa Digital Arts and Clouds, 2008). 209-211.

⁵⁸ Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*. 6-7.

⁵⁹ Marie-Laure Ryan, “Cyberspace, Virtuality and the Text,” in *Cyberspace Textuality: Computer Technology and Literary Theory*, ed. Marie-Laure Ryan (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999). 92-95.

physicality (they are approached through very physical means, without which they could not be engaged), their multiplicity and relatively unconstrained accessibility associate them with that mental category of thoughts, dreams, myths, and spectres. Luckily, just as virtual does not mean fictional or fake, neither does decentralised.

The key to this concept is accessibility through multiplicity; this aspect of an object is defined by those who interact with it. That interaction is often productive beyond generating thought or conversation, as audiences increasingly have tools to materially alter the decentralised objects they encounter. An mp3 can be remixed, a web page can be rescripted, and a video clip from the movie *Downfall* can be re-subtitled to make Hitler complain about being banned from Xbox Live.⁶⁰ These means allow the participant to gain a measure of ownership as part-creator, as do more subtle tools like forwarding, reposting (with or without comment), or referencing. The multiple points of access, along with the fact that the original remains after it has been duplicated, means the object is not overwhelmed by any particular participant. Instead, it is able to incorporate everyone who works with it and will only move irrevocably (like any other object) when a critical mass of participation makes it.

As this shows, the decentralised object, or the aspect of an object that is 'decentralisation', aligns with Manovich's description of a database. That quality of a database, that it holds the possibility of multiple access and multiple alteration, is what we are looking for here. It does not necessarily require the object be defined in terms of SQL, or even exist on a computer. All that is needed is for a thing to be experienced, and then re-experienced.

⁶⁰ In April 2010, Constantin Film AG, the owners of *Downfall* began removing these parodies from YouTube. A new version was quickly made in which Hitler raged about copyright and fair use. Robert Lloyd, "D-Day for the Hitler 'Downfall' Parodies?," (Los Angeles: The Los Angeles Times, 2010).

Un-blackboxing

Another idea from Latour, black boxing is the unification of various, messy, and sometimes contradictory processes into a singular 'clean' structure.⁶¹ One of Latour's enduring concerns is the self-imposed limitation of analysis, the determination that an area of enquiry is only scientific, or political, or discursive. Each realm has traditionally been very proscriptive in its practice; if something does not fit within the bounds of naturalistic or critical analysis, then it does not exist. The sort of dynamic complexity described by Deleuze and Guattari above means proscribed analyses are missing the vast majority of the way the world functions. Latour contends that all this complexity is swept under the rug, actively (in that people generally prefer to apply a previously existing narrative or structure to a given circumstance) or passively (in the case of the rest of everyday life).⁶² His alternative is to allow for all those connections, dig them out from under the shiny unidirectional surfaces we lay over them.

The concept stems from the idea of black boxes in science and engineering, describing a system in which you can only see the inputs and outputs, but not its internal workings. Latour argues that many things become black boxes through their own success; when something is working, there is no need to look too closely. Latour uses the example of an overhead projector. When it works, you have the transparency and the projection. Who needs to know what is happening inside? But if it breaks down, suddenly it has parts, processes, people to fix it. "In an instant our 'projector' grew from being composed of zero parts to one to many. How many actants are really there?"⁶³ Similarly, computers are black boxes *par excellence*, as so much is not noticeable by the user, who just types and sees words appear on the screen. The typing and the words appear to be directly and immediately related, but actually rely on thousands of inputs, transfers, and transformations. Under the surface, things are not as clean and directed as the black box would suggest. Within every object, person, and

⁶¹ This shouldn't be confused with the museum/gallery concept of a black box exhibition space, which emphasises the theatricality of the gallery and is usually used in opposition to 'white cube' presentation.

⁶² Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). 5-8.

⁶³ ———, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999). 183.

process there are contradictions and tangents, incomplete connections and half-truths. What the box does is provide a vector, an averaging-out of all parts that points in one direction in a kind of winner-takes-all democratic process. By opening up the analysis in this way, we have to deal with the fact that not every part will match the whole we thought we had.

The concept also applies with objects' other processes, such as their engagements with people. Terminology can be used this way, naming something to flatten it and filter out alternatives.⁶⁴ Presuming that people only act on objects and not the other way around is another black box. To me, it seems to be a very modernist practice, although something still widely (if not deliberately) used. The complexities, contradictions, and sheer *process* of a situation are streamlined to point in one direction. Postmodernism on the other hand positively revels in uncovering change and difference, although it has often confined itself to thinking about this in terms of discourse.

Following on from the earlier section on agency, there are objects that are able to unbox themselves, or at least act against the tendency to gloss over the processes through which they come to be. As we will see, creative works do this more easily, since they can semantically convey the artist's description of those processes. 'Faulty' objects, interestingly enough, do the best job of unboxing themselves. As the projector example above shows, it is these crisis points that reveal the depth and complexity of objects, because when we see that something is 'wrong', we realise that there was something else we considered 'right'. Black boxes are not only the substitution of simplicity for complexity, but the creation of a sort of frictionless surface that the mind just slips over without consideration. Crisis generates friction, and suddenly there is something to grab ahold of, something to *think about*. Unboxing, then, is the active recognition and use of an object or situation's whole life span.

⁶⁴ It can also have the side effect of completely shifting the interaction with the object over to the terminology. If the object is a single, uncomplicated thing, attention easily slips to the seemingly more productive arena of enquiry.

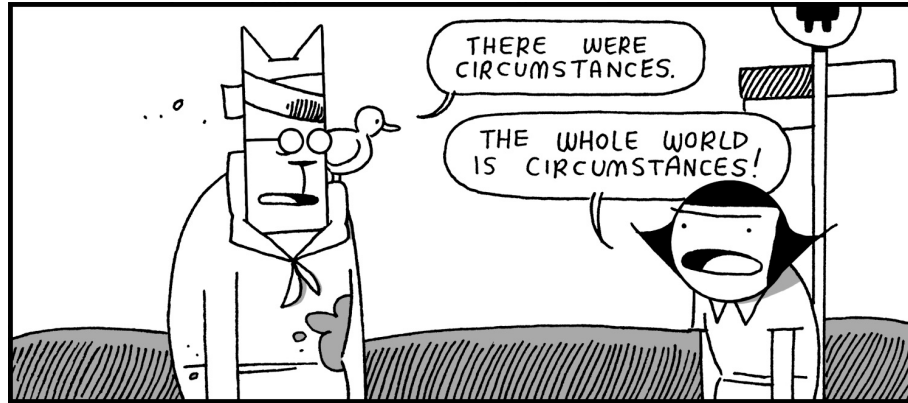
Conclusion

There has been a noticeable trend in the last few years to call a broader and broader collection of activities 'curating'. Elizabeth Schlatter lists its use in several areas, including a 'community curator' job description; 'Curator', software for managing iTunes collections; and the term 'curated consumption'. This grates for some curators, not because of disciplinary boundaries, but out of concern that its use does not reflect the whole of the word's meaning. Michelle Kasprzak says, "The growing use of the term 'curator' in other fields, while misleading to many, fools no one who is actually in the industry and knows about the scope of activities that a curator undertakes." However, she also says this interest from the wider world may ultimately be useful as a teaching moment. Schlatter suggests that these broader usages are actually borrowing the esteem of connoisseurship, the implication that expertise, thoughtfulness, and appreciation of value have gone into the end result.⁶⁵

Unlike those discussed in this chapter, this measure of curation is not precisely based on roles, but on qualities, and it suggests that there may be a way to define curating outside of the institutional framework. We have already performed a considerable redefinition of objects based on material culture and network theory. If our understanding of objects is now so different, mustn't this thing that is so closely tied to artefacts and artworks be changed as well? Since the raw material of curating has been so greatly altered, perhaps it should reflect this, and be rebuilt with process, networks, and change in mind. As we go ahead, we have two tasks to perform. The first is to look closely at some objects, and with the tools now at our disposal see them as the inputs and outputs that have created them. This practical consideration of the theory presented so far will then provide the grounding for the second task: drawing connections between these reconfigured objects and the practices they find themselves participating in. As the objects are seen to be moving through always-changing circumstances, there may then be a way to do the same for people.

⁶⁵ Schlatter, "A New Spin."

Chapter 2: There were circumstances



“A cat walks into a bar”, Dorothy Gambrell, <http://catandgirl.com/?p=2390>.

Reproduced under a Creative Commons licence.

Introduction

Having established a theoretical grounding, the time comes to put it into practice. This chapter is devoted to providing raw data, in the form of each case’s circumstance, filled out to the best of my ability. The networked nature of objects, the value of process and interaction, means that analysis of these works requires detailed description of the situation in which I found them. The concepts discussed above are far ranging, and take in many different aspects of each case. Analysis therefore cannot be attempted until the circumstances are known. By retracing my own experiences, we work out what we need to look for in each specific situation, redrawing the borders that only hold for a single occasion. Furthermore, as both researcher and participant in these cases I have to make clear my own involvement so the reader is properly positioned to judge my analysis and my conclusions.

This chapter should be read for what it is: a highly subjective collection of first-hand experiences informed by the preceding literature and theory. I have tried to limit it to descriptive reportage, but naturally a measure of analysis and interpretation has filtered through to colour the description, hopefully for the better. The preceding material has guided me toward certain emphases and

encouraged the appreciation of some often-sidelined aspects, but I have also had to limit myself. The reach and variability of this class of objects, while useful when it comes to drawing out concepts, can be overwhelming. Each of my case studies could easily fill books with the kinds of descriptions and reflections that follow, but I have chosen to limit myself to particular points of emphasis that will be fleshed out in chapter three.

Case studies

My case studies are unusual, and cannot fairly be said to represent any quintessential 'object'. The enormous range of things that are attached to that term would make even a survey examination a lifetime's work. Instead, I have selected a small handful of objects that provide a place to test the concepts discussed so far. While research with case studies is often broken into extrinsic (cases for the sake of theory) and intrinsic (cases for their own sake), I encourage a reading of these objects as a mix of both. I am trying to illustrate the ideas of the first chapter, but at the same time each case stands as an interesting and valuable thing, and that mix comes from their status as art. A creative work (as all my cases are) is a particular kind of exaggerated object, often making explicit what lies inside all objects. For example, such works are often not mass-produced, or have singular production as an important part of their life. Compared with many other objects, much of their process is not hidden by the black box of factory production lines, making that aspect easier to find and elucidate.

Robert Stake says that the most important consideration for picking cases studies is their 'potential for learning', which is a pedagogical and pragmatic point. If an atypical case can teach us more than a typical one, use it; if certain resources fit the restrictions of your research programme better, see what you can find out from them instead of failing to meet your schedule.⁶⁶ My selections in this chapter are the product of each of these, and the exaggeration helps both. Through these works, the concepts are more easily grasped. And the theoretical

⁶⁶ Robert Stake, "Qualitative Case Studies," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005). 451.

material is, I believe, applicable far more widely than shown here, but that will take much more time to find out. My cases are therefore performers, playing a role that is not entirely themselves now that I have recruited them into my analysis. Nonetheless, by laying out their processes and interactions as I have encountered them (directly and indirectly), I hope to present a useful approximation of their circumstances. These circumstances are and were unique, but with an appreciation of what is unrecoverable, we can tease out some understanding from what is left. Three of my cases are artworks exhibited by Enjoy Public Art Gallery, and the last is an exhibition in itself, a published work by Neil Gaiman.

Enjoy

Enjoy Public Art Gallery is an artist-run initiative, set up in 2000 to generate and facilitate contemporary projects, without the constraints that commercial needs place on artists.⁶⁷ It has a particular curatorial role within Wellington's artistic community, strongly guided by the current curator/director Siv B. Fjærestad. Fjærestad bases Enjoy's programme on the diversity of several balancing factors, including geographical representation, age and experience of artists, media and materials used, and forms of practice.⁶⁸ The curated shows, which make up around half of the programme, are experiments in emergence, in seeing what is brought forth by the juxtaposition of elements. (The other half of the programme comes from submissions, which have a varying degree of institutional curation.) In late 2009, I participated in Enjoy's internship programme as part of the course requirements related to this thesis. In my months there I worked on several shows⁶⁹ and general gallery operations. My participation in each show ranged from gallery sitting to writing press and running an artist's talk. My first three cases are drawn from shows at Enjoy, and I spent a great deal of time with each of them, often seeing and being involved in ways audiences rarely are.

⁶⁷ Hogg, *Enjoy Five Year Retrospective Catalogue*. "About Us | Enjoy Public Art Gallery," <http://www.enjoy.org.nz/node/7>.

⁶⁸ Personal communication with Siv B. Fjærestad, 2009.

⁶⁹ *Too Orangey for Crows*, *Role. Play*, *Tea Time*, *Microcosms*, and *Buy Enjoy*. Information for all these shows is in Enjoy's archive, <http://www.enjoy.org.nz/shows/archive>.

Enjoy occupies a unique position in Wellington's art scene. The art market can easily be seen as a thing of enormous mass, distorting the universe around it. Artists, artworks, audiences, institutions, and more are all bent by the imperative to make work that is sellable; Enjoy aims to provide a small respite from that, to see what happens when commercial value is removed from the process of creation and exhibition.

I have seen many artists being heavily influenced by curators to pursue the most sellable or marketable strand of their practices, which benefits the gallery and the curator at the time, but which after some time proves to be the wrong direction for the artist. As a result the artist is unable to produce what the market wants, and is faced with a challenging path to re-develop their practice.⁷⁰

Fjærestad says that curating with this in mind is in the long-term interest of the artist, who can critically expand their practice with confidence, and the security that their work will not be judged as wanting due to the influence of the market.

Enjoy's curatorial drive is a response to an art history that is, in no small part, still where historiography was before E.P. Thompson's influential social history *The Making of the English Working Class*.⁷¹ Fjærestad wants to encourage the development of an alternative history of art that reflects the "invisible surplus" of artists who do not fit into the regular commercially framed narratives. The idea is to break out from the exchange of big names – Fjærestad argues they act as currency in the art world – and reveal the practices and productions of the many more unknowns who, ironically, the market could probably support. Enjoy's exhibitions and public programmes support this goal, working to present new and emerging work, avoiding overexposure of artists, and offering opportunities to engage with the artists, their work, and their practice. We will now look at three of these works.

⁷⁰ Personal communication with Fjærestad.

⁷¹ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (United Kingdom: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1963).

Erika Sklenars – String Figure works



Figure 1: Erica Sklenars' *String Figure* works installed at Enjoy Public Art Gallery, 2009.
Photo by Bex Pearce.

These two separate but related video works, *String Figure (Censored)* and *String Figure (Kitten)* by Erica Sklenars, emphasise the generation of emergent experience. The first depicts a woman from the waist to the neck, nude, as she performs a cat's cradle routine with a loop of string. The footage is in black and white, and the string has been animated over, starting as a black band and moving through various colours. The second shows a kitten playing with a string being draped from above the frame. This video is colour, and the camera moves more, partially following the kitten's movement but also allowing it to get partially out of frame. Although they were the second case I came across, the *String Figure* works were the first I was able to spend a substantial amount of time with. I found these works of particular interest due to the way they combine their theme and function of play and emergence. As parts of a set (which is added to by another work which was not shown), they speak to one another as well as to the viewer.

The works were part of a group show called *Role. Play*, curated by Siv. B. Fjærestad, and appeared alongside another work by Sklenars, '*In the weekends I like to plant trees and imagine I am you*', as well as several others by Justine Walker and Vivian Lynn. The show's press states:

All in different stages of their careers, Lynn, Walker and Sklenars' individual practices deal with contemporary trajectories relevant to the female experience. Collectively, they speak to a wider social conscience, responsibility, and identity within New Zealand society.⁷²

The catalogue essay for the show, written by Rachel O'Neill, discusses the works' invitation to examine their processes, the labour that caused them to be. Layers, mutation, fantasy, and inhabitation are all present in the exhibition:

Each artist in this exhibition advocates a set of aesthetic intentions and sensibilities, and visualizes an alternative set of intentions and sensibilities. The artists do not assume that the alternative is opposite rather that the alternative harbours a framework visually defined by its unique labour of time.⁷³



Figure 2: Still from *String Figure (Kitten)*, by Erica Sklenars. Image provided by the artist.

Role. Play was one of Enjoy's curated shows, brought together by Fjærestad. The particular choice of artists created a sort of survey of women's art in New Zealand, an idea that a panel discussion of the three artists found problematic.

⁷² "Role. Play | Enjoy Public Art Gallery," <http://www.enjoy.org.nz/node/1027>.

⁷³ Rachel O'Neill, "Requiem for Set," in *Role. Play Catalogue* (Wellington: Enjoy Public Art Gallery, 2009).

Although they agreed that an alternative history of art was needed, they also discussed the way ‘women’s art’ was pigeonholed and subject to a kind of scrutiny male artists do not face. Sklenars later said that trying to class work in this way can derail the art, forcing it to justify itself in a way outside the creator’s goal.⁷⁴

The String Figure works were mounted on two separate plinths of different heights, on unmatched tvs of around similar size. Their relationship is however frustrated. Although they sat closely, it was not really possible to watch both at once. The films are of very different lengths, so there is no deliberate visual consonance in terms of their timing. Any connection of this kind must therefore happen through the chance of process and the experience of the viewer: the order of switching the unsynched dvd players on at the wall and pressing play, the number of times each has looped (creating a different combination each time), the floor position of the viewer, who stands in a trade off between closeness and detail and encompassing vision.

The *Role.Play* show at Enjoy was not the debut of Erica Sklenars’ string-themed video works; they had a prior history not only of creation, but of exhibition. While the films were new to me and many others visiting the space, other audiences had already seen them in another time, place, and formation. The similarity gives us a helpful point of comparison, as the works have been explicitly curated twice, by the artist for her own show *Tickle my Fancy*, and by Fjærestad for Enjoy.

⁷⁴ Personal communication with Erica Sklenars, 31 October 2009.

Max Bellamy – *Microcosms*

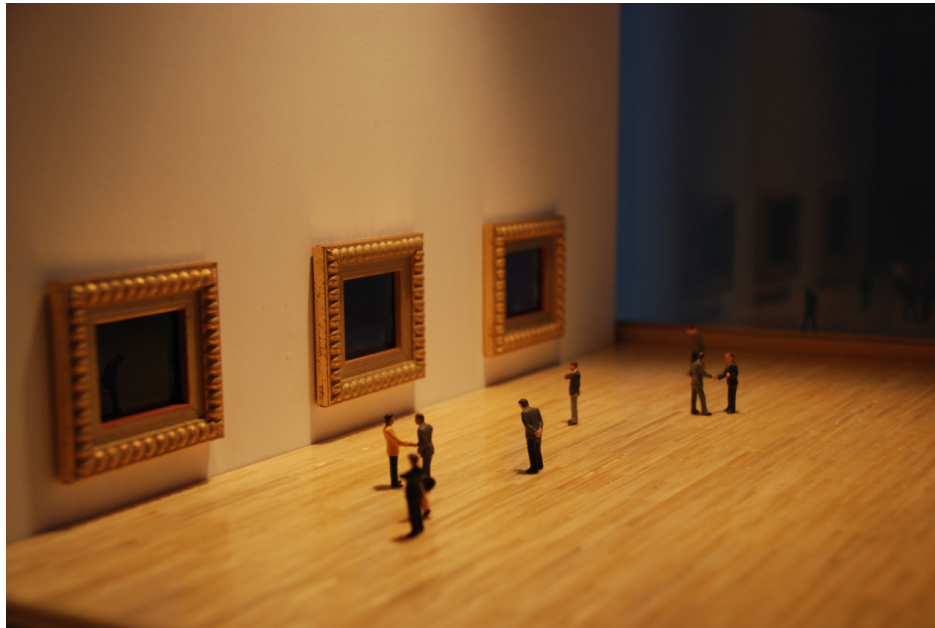


Figure 3: Max Bellamy's *Microcosms* gallery environment, installed at Enjoy Public Art Gallery, 2009. Photo by Kimberly Gustavsson.

Bellamy's works do just what they say in the title – they are miniature-scale scenes of the larger world around them. They are reflections and recreations of aspects of the media-saturated lives we live, each distilling a selected part. The group of closely related works, made over a long period, link up the usually separated physical and virtual 'realms'. Each work is an identical tall museum-style wooden case, topped with a glass enclosure. The cases contain miniature scenes made with clay, models, and a variety of screens, which are showing montages made by the author from mainstream media sources.

The Enjoy show presented six of these scenes: A war-torn drive-in theatre, a desert oasis, a white cube gallery, Times Square, a military-industrial media factory, and a rich world/poor world juxtaposition. The films were made up of television shows like *The Simpsons* and *Twin Peaks*, news clips, YouTube videos, infomercials, talk shows, and Bellamy's own additions. Two of the scenes I found especially interesting, though of course they shared themes and forms with the others. First, the gallery. It contains some of the most intricate figures in careful, varied poses. Compared with the doppelgangers of his earlier works, they have noticeable personality, heightened by their relatively small numbers.

There are people paying careful attention to the framed artworks, and a woman in an elegant dress adjusting her high heel. On the reverse side of the scene, hidden from an initial inspection, there is a camera crew performing an interview. The three artworks are films on small portable media player screens, and are rapidly-changing sequences of famous pieces of visual art (mainly paintings). The viewer of the viewers will recognise at least a few of the works as they flash quickly by, but they may also see themselves in the miniature figures.

The second scene of particular interest is the factory, a microcosm I was able to see in the pre-fabricated stage. In Bellamy's exhibition proposal, he outlined the form and function of the newer works, which included the factory. The final versions were in some ways drastically different, altered by the possibilities suggested by the materials and the effect the action of creation had on Bellamy. The factory environment was going to be closed off from viewing, making it more theatrical with shadows and focus on the screen. In the end, Bellamy decided to hint at the theatrical message while exposing the mechanism of his model. The velvet curtains became a façade, present for the sake of their own artifice, and viewers could see more by circling around the whole work. Describing a 'media-industrial complex', regular citizens are piped in, subjected to one of Bellamy's montages, and come out as soldiers. Careful examination reveals more figures going in to the machine than coming out: the media has a casualty rate of about one in six.

As with the gallery, this active participation gave the viewer more information, in this case an understanding of how the work had been pieced together. Thematically, the model factory workers and their automated assembly line came to refer to not just the media-industrial complex Bellamy is so interested in, but also its own means of construction. The decision to open up the scene's workings adds a layer of reflexivity, a recognition that the artwork participates in the mass media environment. I was able to see this part of the object's history because I was involved as a participant in and facilitator of the exhibition. Access to broader – and to most people, hidden – parts of the object changed my understanding of it.

James R. Ford – *A Tweet a Day*

A retelling of a child's short story through the microblogging service twitter, this work emphasises the distribution and delocation of experience. The story is Tove Jannson's *The Fillyjonk who Believed in Disasters*, from her 1962 *Tales from Moominvalley*. One word is posted every day through the artist's stream, which is received by (at the time of writing) 166 people through twitter's website, an RSS feed, or programmes like TweetDeck or Twitterrific. The word might be "home" or "a" or "fillyjonk". The tweets are posted every day at or around 3.00pm in the UK, which is 'story time' for British schoolchildren.⁷⁵

Ford says on his website,

Ford began using the website Twitter in April 2009 as a way to keep people informed of his art practice and development. But making work is not always quick and he began to fear losing his followers due to lack of updates. The pressure to frequently post interesting tweets became a constant worry.

After re-reading one of his favourite series of books from childhood, Ford found there was sub-text about escaping neuroticism in one of the tales. The irrational fear felt by the main character resonated with Ford's tweet anxiety so he decided to recite the tale via his Twitter profile, thus also easing his own status update neurosis.⁷⁶

Accessing Ford's stream requires a computer, cables or wifi setup, a modem (the small size of tweets in mere bytes allows for dial-up), a telecommunications infrastructure, which allows communication with an internet service provider, and a giant undersea cable linking New Zealand to twitter's servers in the US, for starters. (The process can also be done with a cellphone and its related cell towers and telecommunications company, along with the computer and associated materials to set it up.)

⁷⁵ Personal communication with James R. Ford, 19 December 2009.

⁷⁶ ———, "James R Ford | Works | a Tweet a Day," <http://www.jamesrford.com/works/atweetaday/index.php>.



Figure 4: James R Ford's *A Tweet A Day*, as seen on his own twitter page, 2009.

This work, physically far larger than the confines of the gallery, was nonetheless exhibited as part of Ford's solo show *Too Orangey for Crows* (named after a British ad campaign for a soft drink called Kia-Ora).⁷⁷ The address to follow Ford was provided in all the press materials, including the fliers and Enjoy's regular email-out, making *A Tweet a Day* the first work seen by a lot of the show's audience, particularly regular visitors. However, compared with the hundreds who received the address or otherwise saw the show, relatively few signed up to follow the feed.

This work intrudes upon you. Although you have to initially participate (be on twitter, learn about the work, add @JamesRFord to your feed), from that point it is integrated into a regular part of your life: if you want to receive your other tweets, you have to keep interacting with the work. It has a staccato persistence that acts to remind you of the earlier parts, but with a sufficient gap between words to destroy any chance of following the narrative. Ultimately the work

⁷⁷ "Too Orangey for Crows | Enjoy Public Art Gallery," <http://www.enjoy.org.nz/node/993>.

even becomes normalised, and it stops being unusual to see a single, decontextualised word. Accessing the feed through the website and reading up from the bottom can allow you a sentence or two, which can be enough to get some of the flavour of the story. The persistence is also a comment on the transitory nature of Internet technology and trends, as the odds are low that twitter will survive until the end of the story in 2021.

Ford's piece gains a lot by being surrounded by other tweets, those that use twitter for its ostensible purpose and fill up the 140-character limit. Again, the repetition is important, because unlike those either side, Ford's tweets are linked through each engagement. The work is continuity in the face of disruption, and signal in the face of noise. This manages to cause a disruption of its own, breaking the flow of contained, (generally) meaningful statements by pointing out their isolation. Ironically, Ford's tweets are isolated in their own way, visually boxed off by the amount of white space around them. User interfaces are created with certain expectations in mind, and most twitter interfaces expect a minimum of activity within each tweet. By not even filling a single line, *A Tweet a Day* again distinguishes itself from its environment.

Neil Gaiman – The Sandman: Dream Country

This final object is distinct from the others in that it was not exhibited, and is rather an exhibition in its own right. Although I will save most of the analysis for the next chapter, description of this work is necessarily tied into the content of the book and the author's means of presenting that content. The object in question is a volume of Neil Gaiman's comic book *The Sandman*, four stand-alone issues collected as *Dream Country*.⁷⁸ We can say that *Sandman* is 'about' its own means of creation, and it thereby allows us to see unboxing in action. However, 'about' is not the right word because it suggests a focus on meaning alone, whereas an exhibition incorporates its process, materiality, and meaning to create a whole and interreliant thing. As an object and collection of objects, Gaiman's exhibition combines its process and its message to elucidate both: it is a thing of many parts trying to show that it *is* a thing of many parts. I have

⁷⁸ Neil Gaiman, *The Sandman: Dream Country* (New York: DC Comics, 1995).

already subjected this book to analysis in another research project, and my perspective of it has been substantially affected by the sheer amount of time I have spent with it (easily more than any of the other cases).

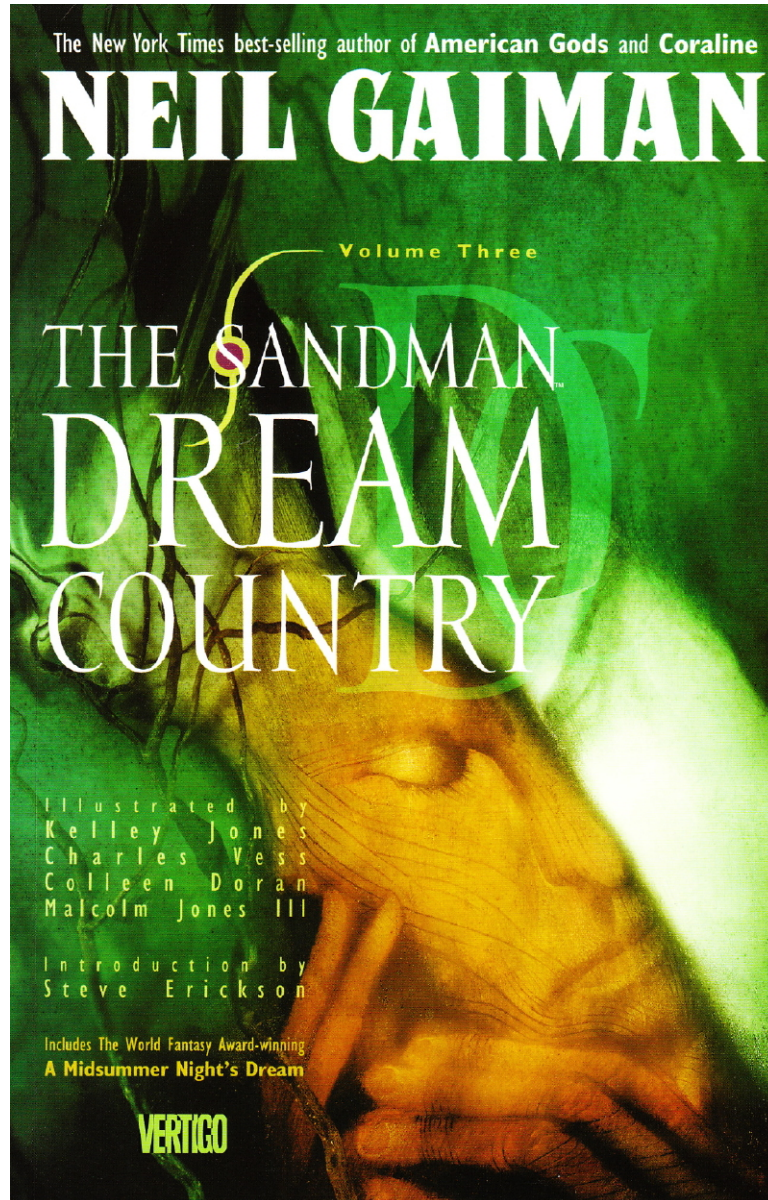


Figure 5: My copy of Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman: Dream Country*. Cover by Dave McKean.

Specifically, this case is my own copy of the volume, bought in 2009 from (if I recall correctly) Real Groovy in Wellington. The new book smell has mostly faded, but is still noticeable. It is a good condition trade paperback measuring 17cm by 26cm by 9mm with a primarily green cover that declares the title and author (who we are told is the *New York Times* best-selling author of **American**

Gods and Coraline), illustrators and letterer. It is quite light for someone who reads a lot of graphic novels and comics in trades, as it is much thinner. By comparison *Maus* is weighty and *Watchmen* is bulky. Already a mass production, the book's life extended to single issues, part of a larger hardcover version, and more recently as .cbr files, a version of the .rar compression format used by comic book reader software. This is the form in which I first read *Sandman*, an often difficult process of very bad scans and constant scrolling. I say all this to ground the content in its current materiality. A lot can be said about the stories and the writing, but this is also still a book with material, affective qualities.

Dream Country operates narratively and structurally as a contained, limited thing. Gaiman has selected a set of boundaries for his (borrowed and created) material; *Dream Country* is a thing of four beginnings and endings, a series of vignettes that infer a greater whole without describing its totality. Each issue is unique in its source material, presentation, temporality, and character focus. Indeed, this book is an exemplary object in its ability to be self-sufficient on one level, while simultaneously expressing connections to a much wider world. The four stories are as follows: *Calliope* tells of a muse, trapped and abused to provide a blocked author with creativity. *A Dream of A Thousand Cats* sees a cat trying to use the power of dreams to return the world to the way it used to be. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* shows the play's first performance, to an audience of faeries, boggarts, and nixies. *Façade* follows a former superhero as she tries to die.

Neil Gaiman came to attention as part of a wave of new British writers and artists who got involved in American comics during the 1980s, alongside others like Alan Moore (*Watchmen*, *V for Vendetta*) and Grant Morrison (*Animal Man*, *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on Serious Earth*). Many of these comics were major departures from existing plots, characterisations, and methods: even the paper and ink was better than before.⁷⁹ *Sandman* was proposed as a very different take on DC Comics' Golden Age 'mystery man' of the same name, who had

⁷⁹ Michael Berry, "The Second British Invasion," <http://www.sff.net/people/MBerry/gaiman.htm>. Originally appeared in *The Express*, 1991.

been previously revived in the 1970s.⁸⁰ A relationship was to exist, but the newer version would operate on an entirely different scale, implanting itself as the older, cosmic aspect that incidentally (and retroactively) generated the superhero. The distilled story became “The Lord of Dreams learns that one must change or die, and makes his decision.”⁸¹ Gaiman collaborated with several artists to determine the look, developing something far removed from Sandman’s 1950s origins.

As in much of his other work, *Dream Country* involves the creation and recreation of mythology, which he defines very broadly to include Olympians and bedtime stories. As mentioned, the whole premise is a transformation of the Golden Age superhero, and within the pages of the comic dozens of rescued and rehabilitated characters appear. Thematically as well, the centrality of dreams resonates, particularly as they are made of everything (“of viewpoints, of images, of memories and puns and lost hopes”) and are also the producers of reality. *Sandman* captures well the messiness of that appropriation process; it is not always exact, because any appropriation is also an adaptation. Circumstance changes the shade of meaning, the nature of a character, and the result of reading. The same dynamism hidden away within a black box is key to the world Gaiman has borrowed and altered to create. Shakespeare’s biography is given some tweaking to make him ‘fit’ a little more tidily. Pantheons are squashed together, polytheism and monotheism exist side by side. The contradictions of the two *Green Lantern* origin stories are set aside with a clean harmonisation. Gaiman later provided a kind of justification for this in *Anansi Boys*, in which we learn that all stories are Anansi stories, and so while they can be tricky as a trickster god, they are still all true.⁸² Therefore, the Odin of *Sandman* is as much Odin as the Mr. Wednesday and the ‘traditional’ Odin of Gaiman’s later *American Gods*. Details cannot get in the way of a good story, and they may even improve it.

⁸⁰ Neil Gaiman, *The Sandman 75: The Tempest* (New York: Vertigo, 1996). ‘History.’ The Golden Age of comic books generally refers to the period from around the debut of Superman in 1938 to the decline of superheroes in the 1950s, and includes heroes from DC, Timely (the predecessor of Marvel), All-American Comics, and Fawcett.

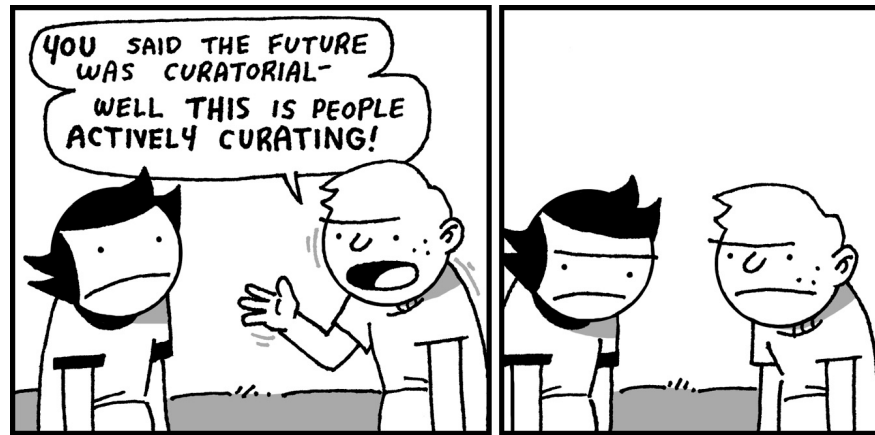
⁸¹ ———, *The Sandman: Endless Nights* (New York: Vertigo, 2003). 8.

⁸² ———, *Anansi Boys* (Kent: Headline Review, 2005).

Conclusion

Chapter one gave us a set of processes by which objects operate generally. Chapter two has given us a small collection of objects undergoing, and constructed from, those processes. As best as I can, I have tried to communicate the circumstances of each object, to get across something of the broad situation of the case study at the point of engagement. The descriptions have been necessarily partial and reflective of the interests of this research, implicitly shaped by the concepts of the first chapter, and as such are no substitute for direct experience. But indirect experience has its value as well, augmented and filtered by reflection, time, and cross-pollination. The theory necessitates both a very broad and deep view: these objects have been directed in certain ways that reduce them, but also make them manageable. You should now be primed to look more closely at the explicit intersection of chapters one and two.

Chapter 3: This is people actively curating



“Hot and cool”, Dorothy Gambrell, <http://catandgirl.com/?p=285>.

Reproduced under a Creative Commons licence.

Introduction

In chapter one I mentioned an effect deconstruction has had on curating: when everything is broken down not much remains, and the gap is most easily filled by the established forms of power. Perhaps instead of pure deconstruction, we can try putting the earlier concepts to work on our cases, and see what *emerges*. In this chapter we return to our cases, having established their circumstances, and now that we are able to draw out their operations, the processes each engages in. I have chosen to associate each case with one of the operations discussed in chapter one, but as usual there is more to them than can be said in this short space. The dissertation format is unfortunately restrictive here. Although I want to foreground the concept of circumstance, and have therefore again structured the chapter around examining each case in turn, I wish the content could also be chopped up and reassembled thematically, as though the material were in a database.

As it is, I hope the readers will accept a certain amount of repetitiveness, and be willing to hang together several disparate parts until the section on the cases is finished, and we move into what they suggest for curating. The complexity and

interreliance that underlies these cases has important implications for the people who would be tasked with their care and exhibition, and we will see the ways that responsibility might be broken down and rebuilt. In the end, what we have constructed will be a new curator.

String Figures

The *Role. Play* exhibition at Enjoy provides a detailed example of emergence, deliberate and, well, emergent. Enjoy's curatorial strategy, as exercised by Fjærestad, is concerned with that which develops from activity and juxtaposition: the show is not fully pre-determined, and alternatives are allowed to come out of its installation and exhibition without being pushed back into the box. The three artists involved had never exhibited together, and their work is not easily grouped into a period, style, medium, or single form of practice. Instead, the show's 'meaning' had to come from the intersection points of the artists and works. It was immanent and not anterior.

The *String Figure* videos' exhibition history is of interest here. Sklenars curated her own show of the work in her graduate exhibition in Whanganui. Called *Tickle My Fancy*, the solo show had an overarching theme of feminine production, down to hand-made pink food. As opposed to *Role. Play*, which was entirely out of her hands, Sklenars had total curatorial control of *Tickle My Fancy*. The earlier show had a much more singular and directed focus, relating to its role in her education and the lack of other exhibitors. The comparison shows us variability in the emergence of a particular narrative for each set of circumstances. While structuring exhibitions to provide a certain narrative is hardly new or unusual – the classic example being the evolutionary hierarchy displays at the Pitt Rivers Museum⁸³ – more recent research shows us how changeable these structures and narratives are. The parts of an exhibition can easily be reused and rearranged to new effect, sometimes with the same results, sometimes different. In *Tickle My Fancy* the work was geared to Sklenars' education, while in *Role. Play*, it was (amongst other things) historicised, gendered, and complemented with the other artworks.

⁸³ Lidchi, "Politics and Poetics." 187-190.



Figure 6: Still from *String Figure (Censored)*, by Erica Sklenars. Image supplied by the artist.

Sklenars' artistic interests are extremely important when looking at her work: they guide action and reaction and while they are no final judge of how the object moves and is received, they have to be incorporated and given weight. In the case of the *String Figure* videos, Sklenars' interest in emergence can be seen to have successfully affected the objects' lifespan, as the concept gets to the heart of why she creates. Her practice comes out of her graphic design training, which emphasised the creation and enforcement of a singular message. Instead, Sklenars wanted to create art that the audience had to work for and thereby participate in. She considers display a performance, intrinsically *for* someone other than the artist, but asks that viewer to meet it halfway. Against manipulation, the goal became encouraging audiences to be more active, creating a dual effect of altering the work with each engagement while still validating the performative act and therefore the work itself.

This means that while the works can be said to be finished, in that the artist has chosen to stop a particular kind of creative action upon them, their further engagements are not only the continuing path of a 'done' thing, but the changing *life* of a reactive and malleable object. The show changed the objects, as did the audience. Instead of creating an object that would only act upon the audience (as

one might attempt in graphic design or advertising), the work wanted to encourage action upon *itself* as well. With agency flowing in both directions, change is mutual, and that change is emergent.

The emergence of viewing may not have a large physical component. By comparison, Sklenars' journeys in India and Europe, the way her practice involved others' active contribution to works in process, and her research into play while editing other work, all had a formative effect on the physicality and materiality of the exhibited works. Viewers, however, contribute an emergence of interpretation and discussion, and through these can affect other viewers' understanding of the object in ways not considered by the creator. Sklenars' accompanying work *In the weekends...* was given a gendered spin by several viewers, assuming the 'planting' of leg hair referenced the crossing of gender or sex roles instead of the more general nesting and transformation of identity Sklenars had in mind. Each step of the way, from creation to exhibition to reception, the works have participated in the generation of newness.

Microcosms

Max Bellamy's miniature scenes are proof that the distinction between 'real' and 'virtual' is unhelpful and unnecessary. From their exhibitionary quality and semantic meaning, through their affective force, right to their material make-up, they cross supposed boundaries between virtuality and actuality. Returning to Ryan's active and flowing interpretation of virtual, we can see how the microcosms continuously move through states, to the point that it is better not to try and keep them separate.

Bellamy's sculptures are highly referential, not just in the shape of the cases (evoking museum modes of display, and the power relationships that go with them), but throughout the montage works that appear in most of the pieces. The montage elements are stills (in the gallery environment), or partial scenes (as in the factory or *Silencing the lambs*, the drive-in scene) and while they operate in a very similar way, they *perform* differently. The rapid flicker of stills in the gallery function as semi-conscious reminders of work that has been

presented and re-presented many times over, such that they have become media images of themselves and the artists who made them. On the other hand, the montages of video clips build a story, engaging the brain in a more narrative style. Either way, the screens build an expectation of viewing, reinforced several times until the viewer reaches Bellamy's divided rich world/poor world. The viewer looks for the screen, until they realise they are watching the act of watching.



Figure 7: Max Bellamy's *Microcosms* factory environment, installed at Enjoy Public Art Gallery, 2009. Photo by Bex Pearce.

The factory scene is very straightforward in its message, but its message is that media (generally split off from otherwise real life) has a compelling and direct effect on those that take it in. People are, Bellamy says, trained to acquiesce and accept the media machine's priorities, a process of immense strain that burns out some of its victims. To attempt to divide 'virtual' media and 'real' life ignores the inextricable interreliance they share. The factory is not only a machine: Bellamy has included figures toting packages, a foreman, people with checklists. Media co-opts people to act for it, expanding its reach materially.

Similarly, the works' affect blends real and virtual. Here, Bellamy comes at the idea from the other side: space is distorted and 'reality' is not so reliable after

all. When examining the gallery environment the viewer is able to identify themselves in the miniature gallery audience, poring over art with deep concentration. The immediacy and scaled reproduction generates a zooming affective quality, conflating the two groups of viewers while disregarding the established size of each and their physical relationship to one another. The viewer has an avatar within the work, and the model inside has a duplicate on the outside. For a disorienting moment, it is hard to grasp one's own position and the viewer has to actively re-establish their 'real' place.

The material of the works has the same kind of dual effect, coming at the division from both sides to break it down. On the one hand, the use of video is sculptural, borrowing from the established reality of the works' wood, plastic, clay, and metal to make the montages just as concrete. By making the videos sculptural, they gain a depth and figurative mass that contrasts with the image's usual feeling of surface. On the other, the video component is prioritised in a way that (semantically and visually) draws the other materials into a subordinate position. In many of the works, the figures are staged to look toward the screens, and the floor and buildings exist to provide support for more media.

As a participant in the organisation of the exhibition, I helped to cross its virtuality and actuality in another way. As mentioned, Enjoy runs non-commercially. While exhibiting artists can choose to list prices for their works, and any sales do net the gallery a commission, the market value of the art is not a substantive part of their exhibition. However, even not-for-profit institutions have economic concerns, chiefly funding salaries, rent, exhibition fees, and so on. The process through which *Microcosms* was exhibited bridged a deliberate gap between art and money, but not in the usual way. I was involved in sourcing sponsorship for the show, a way of augmenting Enjoy's usual funding from Creative NZ, so as to pay the artist's fee and exhibition opening costs. Instead of seeking funding from the common sources of sales, grants, or unrelated corporate sponsorship, we looked to the artwork to find aid. The miniatures and models themselves suggested seeking sponsorship from the local Modelcrafts and Hobbies store. In this way, the objects had an economic aspect that came out of their prior existence, instead of being simply imposed on them from

outside. Virtual and actual have, by this point, been crossed and integrated too many times to reasonably separate them.

A Tweet a Day

As we recall, James Ford's work had no singular physical presence, repeatedly existing on several networks (websites, home computers, servers, and so on) that it shares with others. There may seem to be no place on which to hang analysis: but that lack *is* the means to analyse it. This object's decentralised physicality has several flow-on effects that make the work more complex and express well the interreliance of its material and immaterial parts. It appears at first glance that this is an object without a physical presence, and certainly it does not have a contingent singular mass of substance to call its own. Instead of getting worried about its physicality, it would be better to consider that its *material quality* is to be distributed.

This quality is not especially new, as mass reproducibility has been with us for a long time now, and sidestepping Walter Benjamin and auras, mechanical (and digital) reproduction has been integrated into artistic practice since at least Pop Art. Duplication is expected and required to make many objects, and many artworks, what they are, and it plays an important role in these objects' accessibility. *A Tweet a Day* relies on the large-scale reproduction of its physical components, such as home computers and smartphones, modems, and servers, as well as the vast existing network of wires, transmitters, and receivers. Each computer is substantially like the others, as is each modem, each wire. That there are already hundreds, thousands, millions of these, functioning in the same ways, means the conditions exist for the artwork to occur.

Once it occurs, the infrastructure – the physical stuff of the object – allows for a kind of accessibility similar to telegraph or tv, but far greater in degree. That the @JamesRFord feed has only several dozen followers is not particularly relevant in this case. As every posted tweet is accessed, it is reproduced in unique circumstances many times over, and the *theoretical maximum* of these permutations is in the billions, at least. Duplication leads to accessibility, which

leads to further duplication; only now it has become variation. The physical borders of the object have already been dispersed, and now the ontological borders are looking hazy. Is the object still *A Tweet a Day* in every case? Whether it is surrounded by tweets from Ford himself, random celebrities, or friends talking about their lunch? I think it is, for two reasons. Firstly, duplication and variation are not things that have happened to the object, they *are* the objects, or at least substantial parts of it. Secondly, the process by which the tweet's ontological state is dispersed is really just a technologically inscribed version of the experience of subjective access.

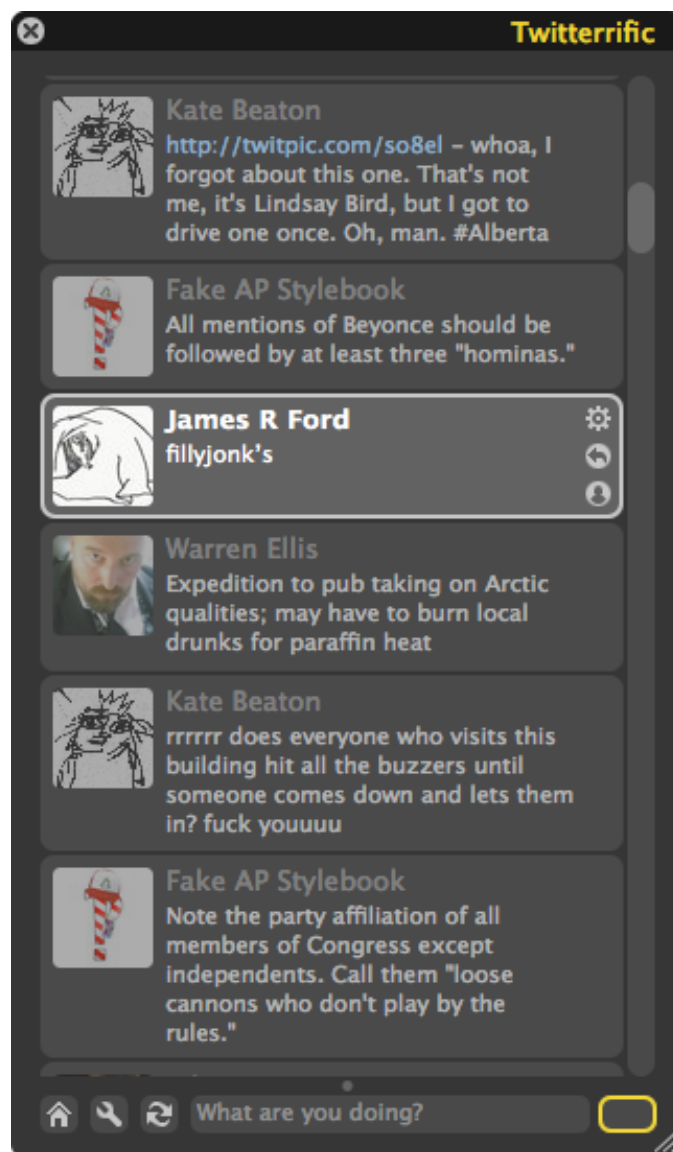


Figure 8: A snapshot of my twitter feed, with Ford's work highlighted, taken 9 December 2009.

In my feed, a tweet stating “faster...” is bordered on either side by a cartoonist asking for courtesy at conventions and a librarian/forum moderator annoyed by a glitch in Google Maps. It is probably the only feed out of all twitter subscribers for which this situation is true. This can be seen as a sort of codification, intrinsic to the programming, of the different ways participants experience an event. Visitor studies recognise the fact that no two viewers will have the same interaction with an object or piece of interpretation, and twitter brings this to the surface. The experiential differences are a major point of the system, in a way that is not seen in other broadcast media. Although much is still out of their control, the viewer’s choices have an obvious impact on what they ultimately engage with.

With this in mind, we should think about the idea of control, and who has it, and why. This is obviously an enormous topic, and can only be skimmed through, but there is one major point I want to focus on: viewer (or participant) control is not the seizure of authorial (or curatorial) control. With the idea that the technology is codified subjectivity, I am suggesting that the exercise of control is functional and repeatable, and that it does not diminish prior interactions in a political way.⁸⁴ The reliable nature of duplication and variation, that it will keep happening, and that it will always be different, lessens the impact of any given iteration on all the others. However, it retains its value for the participants who have had input, exercised control, in *that* iteration. In short, even though experience, affective or otherwise, is subjective, its value is not diminished by the existence of *other* subjective experiences.⁸⁵ What appears to be the uncontrollability of internet-based media is, as with the already mentioned qualities, better understood as the dispersal of control.

The viewer’s control in this case has to do with *A Tweet a Day*’s repetitiveness, which has the effect of establishing itself within ‘regular life’. Subscription means the daily updates find their way into the participant’s chosen and established system of computing, programmes, checking for updates, and other

⁸⁴ It can always still *be* political, if that’s what people make of it, though.

⁸⁵ James Flynn makes much this point in his development of a morality without objectivity. See James R. Flynn, *How to Defend Humane Ideals: Substitutes for Objectivity* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

subscriptions. Alongside the formalised subjectivity this produces, it also means the artwork is not bound by the gallery. Rather, it recreates for itself a new gallery with each iteration, one that straddles the division between public and private art. The audience, through their choice of who to follow and how to access their feed, have much more input into their 'home gallery' than they would when visiting the rest of *Too Orangey for Crows*. The composition of the object is such that each audience member can make what they will of it, even more than with a regular subjective experience.

Dream Country

As I have said, *Dream Country* stands in for *Sandman* generally, the part performing the role of the whole, and of Gaiman's other work outside the comic. The broader operation that interests me, distilled into *Dream Country*, is that of an object that exhibits its own process: it unboxes its black box. Not only this, but it reveals the box that is Gaiman-the-writer, who explains via the book what it does to him.

Each of the *Dream Country* stories examines a different kind of storytelling in a way that reveals and equalises their efficacy. Greek mythology is powerful and inspiring, as are oral storytelling, Shakespearean wordsmithery, and comic book serials. Through the course of the apparently unrelated stories the power of Gaiman's character Morpheus is established and strengthened, augmenting his 'realm' of dream, myth, fiction, and imagination. Before this point we have seen Morpheus give someone endless awakenings, engulf a supervillain within the Dreaming, jump from dream to dream, best a demon in a battle of wits, uncreate a nightmare, and more. But in these issues, Gaiman reveals just how powerful dreams – and fiction – are. Against the grim 'reality' of the Alan Moores and Frank Millers of the world, Gaiman suggests that imagination *forms* reality and how we can live in it. This power is also democratised, a universal ability unconstrained by topic or content: it is the telling that counts, not the tale. The creation of worlds within the comic reflects the creation of worlds beyond it.

Out of this, Gaiman examines the way a work comes into being, and his perspective is a decidedly worldly one. Echoing a theme of the Shakespeare version, Gaiman's *Midsummer Night's Dream* not only shows the Rude Mechanicals putting on a play within a play, but also Shakespeare's company in all its practical, petty, bickering glory. One actor protests the comic nature of the play, asserting his tragic capacity. The men playing the female roles are vain about their looks. Beards are stolen, money is argued over, and the Bard himself seems to be more of a wrangler than a playwright. Putting on a play involves some pretty unappealing sausage-making, in stark contrast to the common image of Shakespeare as an other-worldly genius, un beholden to the base materiality of the world. By grounding creativity when he looks at Shakespeare's plays, Gaiman asks the audience to do the same in their own reading.

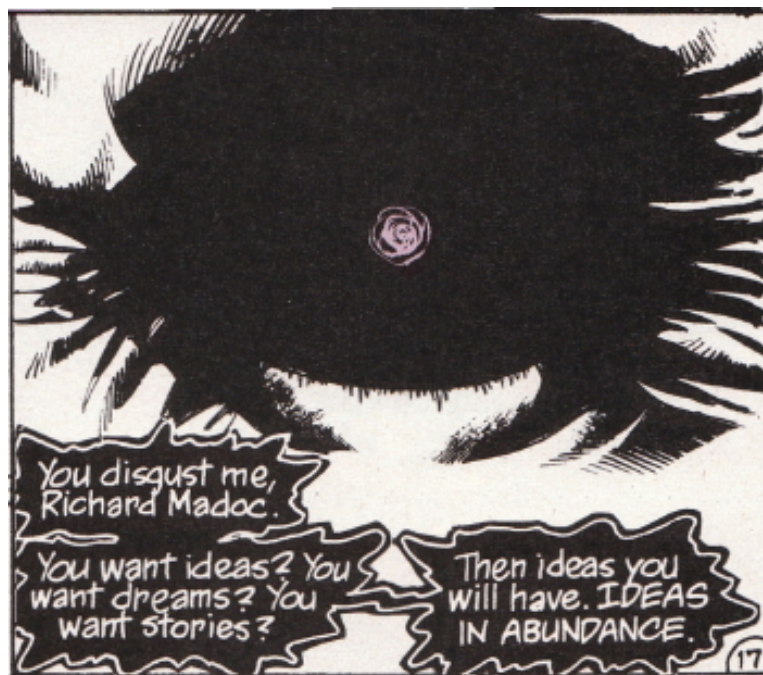


Figure 9: Panel from "Calliope", the first issue of Gaiman's *Dream Country*.

The idea comes back in the final issue of *Sandman*, as Shakespeare and Morpheus discuss the second play of their bargain, *The Tempest*. Writing is subjected to the same scrutiny as performance, and is found to be just as much of a *process*. Even though Morpheus has provided the inspiration, the waking world forms the material and the form of the play. News of a shipwreck is the instigator, and Shakespeare draws content from a pair of showman in the pub, a fellow

playwright, and arguments with his wife. He writes a speech devoid of meaning to cover the few minutes an actor must be backstage to change clothing and drink a beer, and one more to placate another who wanted to show off. Furthermore, he fears for the effect of his work on his soul – what if he is writing for the devil, how will this harm him? As does everything else, this makes it into the play.

That the author is changed is another of Gaiman's recurring themes and forms. Speaking through Shakespeare, Gaiman tells of how his perception of the world has been co-opted by the process of being a writer: everything he takes in, sees, hears, is filtered through a layer of consciousness dedicated to the sourcing of material.

Whatever **happened** to me in my life, happened to me as a writer of plays. I'd fall in love, or fall in lust. And at the height of my passion, I would think, "so **this** is how it feels," and I would tie it up in pretty words. I **watched** my life as if it were happening to someone else. My son died. And I was hurt; but I **watched** my hurt, and even **relished** it, a little, for now I could write a **real** death, a **true** loss... My heart was broken by my dark lady, and I wept, in my room, alone; but while I wept, somewhere inside I smiled. For I knew I could take my broken heart and place it on the stage of the Globe, and make the pit cry tears of their own.⁸⁶

One popular misconception about 'creative types' is that they simply generate ideas from whole cloth, which they then impose onto the material world around them. But Gaiman is saying that the fact of being a writer bends the way that person experiences their life: the work does not end at the front and back covers. It spreads out into all parts of the writer's life, forcing them to see, hear, and think differently. A writer's view of the world is bent by the drive to create and the need for new material. Every experience is passed over with an analytical eye that scans for what is usable, seeds of truth that can make the work more complete.

The work, the author, and the process of creation all exist together, exercising control over one another in different ways, depending on the exact circumstance. Within the black box of the readable work there is a mass of

⁸⁶ Gaiman, *The Sandman* 75: *The Tempest*. 40.

circuitous and sometimes contradictory influences. Although the author is generally privileged as ‘creator’, Gaiman knows firsthand how little control he sometimes has, and how much the fact of being a writer has changed him. The implication is also there that, through the nature of stories, something similar happens to readers. By exhibiting himself, his creations, and his take on the work of others, and by emphasising the formative, participatory power of imagination, Gaiman offers up his authorial control to the reader. The object provides the means to revisit and reuse existing mythologies, just as Gaiman does, and that includes the tales contained in its pages. The box unpacks itself, revealing its depths and those of other stories.

Curating

The big twist of this dissertation is the way a focus on material culture theory, a focus on the importance of objects, brings us to a reconsideration of the practices and people that supposedly control these things. Rather than look at curating and ask, “how do we curate these things?” we ask “what do these things do to curating?” Having explored four objects in detail, what can we apply to the concept, theory, and practice of curation?

The main lesson to learn from these cases is the importance of circumstance. As commonly used, the word carries connotations of impersonal, undirected happenstance. It is often a fatalistic term, suggesting inevitability without cause or participant. But circumstance isn’t the operations of dumb luck; it’s the combination of many purposeful and accidental processes that make up a moment as direct and indirect action, both immediate and at many steps removed, collide. The sense of inevitability is justifiable, in as much as certain things put in motion will follow natural laws and sociological likelihoods, but it is tempered by the *history* of a given circumstance. Tracing lines back (and, as needed, forward) from a moment, we can see the multiple and varied inputs and participants in that moment’s historical existence. The nature of circumstance means that each is unique and interesting in its own right. There is always something new to see.

As a brief reminder, the roles discussed earlier differ between gallery and museum curating. In a gallery, an explicit relationship between curator and artist is the focus, and the curator's role is largely defined by the balance of power between the two. Some have tried to affect this balance either by empowering the curator to create, or by requiring their prior artistic engagement. In museums the role is more tied to the audience, whether the goal is to control them, offer them something, or allow them a voice. These roles are clearly well derived from practice, and provide guidance for further work. But they all contain a set restriction on their applicability, which is the need to hold the designation *curator* to act or participate in the role.

Practices

The analysis so far performed on my cases has not been for its own sake. The inputs and outputs, the networks and processes are not meant to be solely applied to the objects, the artworks that 'have curating' done to them. I have tried to point out that given the connections and complexities of material culture, *all* the supposedly separate parts of an object share in its processes, and that includes the people involved. Although the fact of curatorial designation is important and productive for what happens to an object (I will return to the undeniable effect of the named curator), the spread of action across many actors suggests we look past the name and look for the practices that make up curating, wherever they may be found.

There are five practices that I see as the core aspects of curation: Enquiry, selection, analysis, interpretation, and presentation. As ever, these cross over with one another, and certainly do not always happen in order, but it is worth separating them out at first, so we know what we are looking for. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to those not designated as 'curator' as 'non-curators', though they are, as I argue, engaged in curatorial practice. As needed, I have broken it further down into behaviours. Ideally, each of these practices would be the subject of a large research project in their own right, looking into the range of active and passive behaviours, the degree to which they are exercised by curators and non-curators alike, and the effect they have on the participating

people and objects. Unfortunately, that is beyond the scope of the present work, and will have to be taken up down the line. The following descriptions are heavily generalised and abstracted, and can probably be contested in specifics, but I think they legitimately outline the shapes of these practices.

Enquiry is the formation of questions and the search for the means to answer them. This is an extremely powerful practice, as it goes a long way towards setting the terms of what follows. The curator has considerably more involvement in this practice than the non-curator, as they have more to do with the raw materials that become the exhibition, and they spend more time with those materials. The curator enquires by asking what the show should be about, how it might convey that meaning, and what resources their institution has to make it happen. Enquiry is internal and external: as well as the questions regarding inside museum operations, questions have to be asked about the visitors. Who are they? Why do (or don't) they go to the museum? What do they expect, and how much does that have to be accommodated or pushed further? Each question and the search for answers gets the curator closer to the production of a coherent and effective exhibition.

On the other hand, the non-curator enquires with a mix of behaviours, starting with curiosity about seeing the show. When there, they ask questions about what the exhibition contains, why it looks the way it does, and whether there is something missing. The questions emerge out of their own experiences and interests mixed with the offered material and narratives. A pupil on a class visit to the Museum of Wellington will have different questions to a former waterfront worker or an American tourist. What this shows is the possibility of starting a new enquiry at any point, even when the project has supposedly been finished. Some exhibitions are created with this in mind: Enjoy's curatorial philosophy is that the community should be able to react to what they are shown, and the Adam Art Gallery's 2009 show *The Future is Unwritten* was explicitly curated as a stage in a much longer process.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ "The Future Is Unwritten | Adam Art Gallery," <http://www.adamartgallery.org.nz/past-exhibitions/thefuture/>.

Selection is the choice of paths taken, and equally of those blocked off. Any positive choice brings with it any number of alternatives that are no longer accessible, and applies to choices of objects, narratives, design decisions, and so on. Clearly, selection happens continuously throughout the engagement and re-engagement of curation, but I have distinguished it to note its ubiquity and its particular relevance to the use and deployment of objects. Early museums, like the Wunderkammer and Kunstkammer of old, involved the exhibition of everything that was collected – the exhibition *was* the collection⁸⁸ – but as exhibitionary ideas have changed and collections have swollen, it became undesirable and impractical to do so. Since then, exhibition has always involved the selection of objects, and the selection of what to do with them. This practice reveals the accumulated knowledge and internal measures of value held by the curator, the expression of their understanding as to whether an object meets the needs established by enquiry.

But the viewer also selects. Along with interpretation, this is one of the practices most easily performed by non-curators. Choices are made as to when and where to visit, who to go with, and how long to stay. Visitors usually choose how they move through the space, choosing how much attention they will pay to the supplied guidance. When faced with an exhibition, they select which objects and labels they will pay attention to. Their accumulated experience meets the curator's, as embodied in the exhibition, and opens up a range of options, from which the visitor picks in a mix of conscious and unconscious behaviour.

Analysis is the interrogation of the selected material in relation to the established question and the questioner. For the most part, curators perform this actively, while non-curators do so reactively, unless they are particularly involved with the topic or objects. In part, analysis is one of the tools used to answer the questions raised by enquiry. It helps determine the value of the object to the project, and places it in a useful relationship to others. Analysis is of course also performed outside the immediate needs of an exhibition, and can be used to

⁸⁸ Lidchi, "Politics and Poetics." 155-160.

develop future projects. The results necessarily reflect the way it is performed and the person doing it, allowing an external viewer a measure of insight into the processes under the surface.

That external viewer, the non-curator, can then perform their own analysis. Their take on the curator's work will be reactive, but once again it is emergent out of the mix, reliant on what is added by all participants. It will deliver a dissimilar result to the curator's, as they work from a different starting point, with different knowledge, but they function in much the same way. If we stretch outside the official exhibition context, the non-curator's practice also takes on a more active cast. Distribution of access, in the case of objects that are capable of it, encourages analytical action by the non-curator.

Interpretation is the translation of known information into a coherent narrative. While we can hold within ourselves a great deal of data, ideas, and connections, it is extremely hard to transfer that to another person while the thoughts are still in their internal state. We have to order, link, and sometimes change the scattered fragments of thought, making them linguistically viable,⁸⁹ and we (usually) attempt to do so in a way that we believe makes sense to the intended target. Sometimes the target is ourselves. As Richardson and St. Pierre say, the act of writing changes and adds to what we know, making that act of interpretation an act of analysis.⁹⁰ More commonly, the practice is aimed at others, as when a curator has something to tell a non-curator.

Current museological thinking says that the objects themselves can only say so much by themselves, so they are usually placed within a very strong interpretive frame, where the objects act as secondary illustrations for a primary narrative. This is primarily linguistic, with visual aids, and is the result of research, writing, editing, testing, and design. Curators can also place objects to suggest relationships between things, as when a *wharenui*, *pataka*, and *waka* are laid out

⁸⁹ While communication does not have to be narrative, or even language-based, the vast mass of interpretation is. Whether through words, colours, or dance, the important thing is the translation of information from one state to another.

⁹⁰ Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre, *Writing: A Method of Enquiry*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005). 965.

to suggest a village. Art curation is generally much less explicitly interpretive (except in a few major cases, like Te Papa's *Toi Te Papa* exhibition), but interpretation is developed through placement, catalogues, talks, and generally through reference to established art history, theory, and criticism.

'Known information', in this definition, is not restricted to information that has been uncovered in the course of enquiry or analysis; it is much broader than this. This action is accessible to non-curators due to the ease with which otherwise discrete information flows together. As discussed, viewers bring with them all kinds of existing knowledge and ideas. This is commonly described as the 'lens' through which they view the exhibition, but we have seen how the relationship of engagement is more complex than the influence one part has over another. When a viewer applies their prior understanding to the situation with which they are faced, they are interpreting each to see how it fits with the other; the object and the viewer's experiences are two databases constructing a unique and readily shifting interpretive front.

Presentation is the provision to others of the opportunity to perform further curatorial actions. It is emphatically not a final step, and like the other practices it recurs throughout the curatorial process whenever others are involved. Although it can be the point of letting go (and everyone knows the feeling of sending out something they have made, for use, appreciation, or criticism), there is nothing about presentation that says those who have been involved so far must play no further part. It may be worth thinking of presentation as a duplication point, in line with what has already been said about that concept. The material might not be duplicated (unless it is), but curatorial opportunity is: each participant can now take the curated thing their own way. Like the dispersal of reproduced objects, once duplication has been performed, variation is possible. It may be curtailed, if each participant has the same goal in mind or one is able to remove the other's ability to act, but if free to perform and make one's own choices, presentation allows new participants the space to start curation all over again.

Presentation takes many forms depending on when the participant comes into the curatorial process. In the case of an exhibition, it can be the placement of objects, the tone of the interpretation, the visual design, the tour presentation, the education programme, the discussion and explanation between viewers, the review, the documentation, and more. At any point in which a new actor joins those already involved, presentation has occurred. Curators and non-curators alike share this capacity, aided by the phenomenal number of forms of communication we have available. Likewise, there is a vast and growing range of locations to present. The Internet is the obvious place to look, as it is basically a meta-media, a media form with the ability to hold other forms. Once an object extends its networked existence online, it can be presented, re-presented, and represented in all kinds of ways. Even offline, curatorial practices can be layered upon one another as the object moves through its life.

Conclusion

Much of what I have described here is undeniably abstracted; some is probably quite inapplicable to certain curatorial situations. But by looking at these case studies with a material culture studies-influenced eye, we can grasp the complexity of the networks that *are* these objects. These concepts and operations require a lot of the people they relate to, but they also greatly increase the effective *opportunities* for those same people. I have suggested a very broadly distributed and democratic array of curatorial practices, all of which act in concert to form and reform curatorial circumstances. Still, I have a soft spot for professionalism and expertise, and due to funding, access limitations, institutional connections, and the general fact that not everyone *wants* to be their own curator all the time, there is still something distinct and valuable about the formal curatorial role. It is finally time to turn to the last of our tasks, and reconstruct the deconstructed curator.

Conclusion: The curatorial future

What is a curator?

It might be odd at this point to ask what a curator is – surely a curator is someone who curates, as outlined in the previous chapter’s list of practices? But I am writing for an academic and institutional audience, not a public one, and the point becomes what to make of the thing we *call* a curator. My initial research question has proved to have major implications for how we understand objects, and therefore for those who are tasked with their guardianship. Furthermore, I have very little input into the way viewers, visitors, and participants might exercise their curatorial ability. What I *can* do is make suggestions for how institutional curators might deal with these vast numbers of public curators. I am absolutely begging the question here, saying that those inside the museum or gallery will recognise the practice being performed by those outside, but if we now return to the curatorial role we will see how much it has been changed by this digression into practices.

Perhaps the most important idea brought up in this dissertation is that there is no such thing as a finishing point. There is no static, frozen-in-amber thing we can look at and say, ‘that’s done’. The most handled, thought-over, fought-over, curated, exhibited object is still just so much raw material when the next engagement begins, in all its complex networked messiness. This necessitates a concept of curating that is distributed, variable, and transformative of object and participant. It *does not* necessitate a curatorial concept that disregards the value of the professional’s training, expertise, and nous. An entry on *The New Curator* would suggest I have done just that: if you are not officially a curator, you are, “at best, a filter.” Only a *real* curator prevents the descent into the morass of reality television voting.⁹¹ But (putting aside the harmful effects of unrestrained

⁹¹ "You Are Not a Curator," *The New Curator*, <http://newcurator.com/2010/03/you-are-not-a-curator/>. There is a strong contrast between this entry and Sandell’s work in particular. While the former views distribution as cheapening, the cause of ‘wooly thinking’ that will destroy the institution’s respected role of cultural bastion, Sandell’s research looks at the *productive* aspects of inclusion, including the means to make up for the harm done by institutions

pessimism about your fellow human beings) there would seem to be no real need to exclusively couple curating to the curator. Unless 'curating' is strictly the *combination* of activities, skills, and relationships laid out in a particular job description with Curator written at the top, there would seem to be room for both the role and the practices. In fact, I would argue that the role of the curator is to *be* the place where those practices intersect consistently and professionally.

There are several pragmatic points to consider. An obvious start, but worth saying: the curator has an institution at their disposal. Though this is the foundation of the Foucauldian critique, I do not see it as an intrinsic negative. It is not an unmitigated positive either, but it allows the individual curator to extend themselves and their actions in all kinds of productive ways, and even though these resources, tools, and opportunities are not entirely 'their own'. Again, like objects and exhibitions, the curator performs their function through engagement with their circumstances. An institution provides all kinds of opportunities that distinguish the relative productive capacity of the curator and the non-curator. Beyond the usual matters of resourcing and centralised operation, I think this also matters for the relationships available to the curator, most importantly with those who already work so closely with the public. Internal educators have gone through the process of extending their field throughout the operations of the institution – education has been a major impetus for change in the last few decades – and provide an excellent example of productive extension. Additionally, so much of their work already relates to the involvement of external participants, suggesting a worthwhile point of collaboration.

Communication is so very easy nowadays, with so many channels with which to reach out that institutions can choose those that fit their niche, their community, the best. The curator's responsibility in this case is to move away from broadcasting to reflexive, participatory tools and structures. These modes of communication are also becoming easier to use within the institution and exhibition, as well as externally. The increasing use of new media objects

that consider themselves cultural bastions that are owed respect. See Sandell, *Museums, Society, Inequality*.

requires a curator with certain skills. Sara Diamond points out the accelerating effect of technology on new media art, accelerating avant-gardism to the point that net.art was declared dead in 1998, just as most people (including many artists) were starting to get into the web. The other result is that more art is exhibited outside of galleries, and audiences are getting more accustomed to finding art all around the internet. A curator in this area must then be very involved, and has to possess enough understanding to bridge the gap between a forward-moving artist and an audience that has access to the work, but not necessarily the knowledge assumed by the artist.⁹²

Empathy is the part of the role I see as driving the rest, and ensuring that the curator continually performs their practice in a developing and unfolding way. It is up to this curator to reciprocate, to see in their audiences the curatorial qualities the audience has already acknowledged in them. Acceptance of the curatorial activity performed by audiences means the curator can allow for developments after the initial exhibition, and even hand over some responsibility for the life of the show: the counterpart to working with relevant communities in the development of exhibitions. As in those cases (like the changing community shows at Te Papa), the curator brings their expertise to the situation as an input, not a final answer.

As should now be clear, the main theoretical implication of this research is the synthesis of museum and art curating into one body. Chapter one had to address each separately, as they have been discussed in such different terms, one subtly implicit in the texts, one openly and forcefully explicit. While there are still important differences between the two areas, particularly regarding how the audience is understood, and the input of the object's creator, those are matters that occur through the processes discussed. The object, whether art or artefact, remains a complex, process- and network-based thing, reliant upon and contributing to its circumstances. Basically, there are more similarities than differences, and even the differences *function* in the same way.

⁹² Sara Diamond, "Silicon to Carbon: Thought Chips," in *Beyond the Box: Diverging Curatorial Practices*, ed. Melanie Townsend (Banff: Banff Centre Press, 2003). 152, 156-159.

One word started this document, an emphatic *no*. As elaboration, we traced our way through an alternative epistemological and ontological position, rethinking objects and the people who interact with them. Instead of position, we found movement; instead of essence, we found process. Now I offer another word to summarise this perspective: *serendipity*. The term does not just mean dumb luck or accident. Accidental circumstances are constantly unfolding, but they often do not resolve into a deliberately productive (useful?) situation. The serendipitous moment is the collision of an accident and the capacity to make something of it. Roberts, surveying the long history of inadvertent discoveries in the sciences, discusses the role of the prepared mind, one primed with curiosity, willingness to accept alternatives, and broad perceptive scope.⁹³ These same qualities are valuable for curators of all kinds, institutional and public, and can be deliberately developed and nurtured. By looking for processes, for opportunities, you *will* find them.

The future is curatorial! It could have just been a descriptive statement, relating to the ways increasing numbers of people are using the Internet, with blogs, rss feeds, community websites, and the general exercise of consumer choice. But it is a call to action, a manifesto relating to means and not ends. It supposes an openness to the operation of serendipity, the active preparation for its enactment, and the willingness to carry it forward in a way that allows further serendipitous moments. To curate is to be involved and to encourage the involvement of others. We find ourselves in a kind of post-postmodern place, what Knell would consider a mature, less anxious postmodernism that has internalised the lessons of the last few decades.⁹⁴ Deconstruction is not denied, but shown to be part of continuous reconstruction and reconfiguration that everyone participates in. Agency, power, and the sociopolitical actions that come from those are both necessary and effective, in stark contrast to the modernist isolated individual or the befuddled masses of certain stripes of postmodernism. The future curator is everybody, everywhere.

⁹³ Royston M. Roberts, *Serendipity: Accidental Discoveries in Science* (New York: Wiley Science Editions, 1989). 244-245.

⁹⁴ Simon J. Knell, ed. *Museums in the Material World* (Oxon & New York: Routledge, 2007). 3-6.

Bibliography

- "About Us | Enjoy Public Art Gallery." <http://www.enjoy.org.nz/node/7>.
- Alloway, Lawrence. "The Great Curatorial Dim-Out." In *Thinking About Exhibitions*, edited by Bruce W. Ferguson Reesa Greenberg, Sandy Nairne, 221-30. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Appadurai, Arjun. *The Social Life of Things*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Attwood, Bain. "Contesting Frontiers: History, Memory and Narrative in a National Museum." *reCollections: Journal of the National Museum of Australia* 1, no. 2 (2006): 103-14.
- Bagnell, Douglas. "What Is Digital? Concepts and a Chronology." In *The Aotearoa Digital Arts Reader*, edited by Stella Brennan and Su Ballard, 21-27. New Zealand: Aotearoa Digital Arts and Clouds, 2008.
- Barker, Emma. *Contemporary Cultures of Display: Art and Its Histories*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999.
- Bennett, Tony. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Berry, Michael. "The Second British Invasion." <http://www.sff.net/people/MBerry/gaiman.htm>.
- Bille, Mikkel, and Tim Flohr Sørensen. "An Anthropology of Luminosity: The Agency of Light." *Journal of Material Culture* 12, (2007): 263-84.
- Bordieu, Pierre, and Alain Darbel. *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*. Translated by Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997.
- Brennan, Stella, and Su Ballard, eds. *The Aotearoa Digital Arts Reader*. Auckland: Aotearoa Digital Arts Trust and Clouds, 2008.
- Castaldo, Annalisa. "'No More Yeilding Than a Dream': The Construction of Shakespeare In 'The Sandman'." *Shakespeare and Popular Culture* (2004): 94-110.
- Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oak, London, and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1994.
- Davis, Sela. "Designing for Emergent Gameplay and Narrative." In *GamesPlusBlog*, 2010.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. London and New York: Continuum, 2004.
- Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna K. Lincoln, eds. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Third ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005.
- Diamond, Sara. "Silicon to Carbon: Thought Chips." In *Beyond the Box: Diverging Curatorial Practices*, edited by Melanie Townsend, 141-68. Banff: Banff Centre Press, 2003.
- Eco, Umberto. *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

- Eichstedt, Jennifer. "Museums and (in)Justice." In *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Hugh H. Genoways, 127-37. Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2006.
- Feldman, Jeffrey David. "Contact Points: Museums and the Lost Body Problem." In *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, edited by Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden and Ruth B. Phillips, 245-67. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006.
- Fjærestad, Siv B. 2009.
- Flynn, James R. *How to Defend Humane Ideals: Substitutes for Objectivity*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000.
- Ford, James R. 19 December 2009.
- . "James R Ford | Works | a Tweet a Day." <http://www.jamesrford.com/works/atweetaday/index.php>.
- Fowle, Kate. "Who Cares? Understanding the Role of the Curator Today." In *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating*, edited by Steven Rand and Heather Kouris. New York: apexart, 2007.
- Gaiman, Neil. *Anansi Boys*. Kent: Headline Review, 2005.
- . *The Sandman 75: The Tempest*. New York: Vertigo, 1996.
- . *The Sandman: Dream Country*. New York: DC Comics, 1995.
- . *The Sandman: Endless Nights*. New York: Vertigo, 2003.
- Gell, Alfred. *Art and Anthropology: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- . "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology." In *The Art of Anthropology: Essays and Diagrams*, edited by Eric Hirsch, 159-86. London: The Athlone Press, 1999.
- . "Vogel's Net: Traps as Artworks and Artworks as Traps." In *The Anthropology of Art: A Reader*, edited by Howard Morphy and Morgan Perkins, 219-35. Massachusetts, Oxford & Victoria: Blackwell, 2006.
- Gosden, Chris, and Chantal Knowles. *Collecting Colonialism*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2001.
- Hall, Martin. "The Reappearance of the Authentic." In *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, edited by Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Szwaja and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, 70-101. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Ham, Sam. "Meaning Making - the Premise and Promise of Interpretation." In *First National Conference on Interpretation*. Edinburgh, 2002.
- Hein, Hilde S. *The Museum in Transition: A Philosophical Perspective*. Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2000.
- Henning, Michelle. "Legibility and Affect: Museums and New Media." In *Exhibition Experiments*, edited by Sharon MacDonald and Paul Basu, 25-46. Malden: Blackwell, 2007.
- . *Museums, Media and Cultural Theory*. Berkshire: Open University Press, 2006.
- Hoffman, Jens. "A Certain Tendency of Curating." In *Curating Subjects*, edited by Paul O'Neill, 137-42. London: Open Editions, 2007.
- Hogg, Melanie. *Enjoy Five Year Retrospective Catalogue*. Wellington: Enjoy Trust, 2005.
- Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean. "Education, Postmodernity and the Museum." In *Museum Revolutions: How Museums Change and Are Changed*, edited

- by Simon J. Knell, Suzanne MacLeod and Sheila Watson, 367-77. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.
- . "Studying Visitors." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, edited by Sharon MacDonald, 362-76. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.
- Hoskins, Janet. "Agency, Biography and Objects." In *Sage Handbook of Material Culture*, edited by Chris Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands and Patricia Spyer, 74-84. London: Sage Publications, 2006.
- Jones-Garmil, Katherine, ed. *The Wired Museum*. Washington: American Association of Musuems, 1997.
- Karp, Ivan, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Szwaja, and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, eds. *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998.
- Knappett, Carl. *Thinking through Material Culture: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2005.
- Knell, Simon J., ed. *Museums in the Material World*. Oxon & New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Latour, Bruno. "On Technical Mediation - Philosophy, Sociology, Genealogy." *Common Knowledge* 3, no. 2 (1994): 29-64.
- . *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- . *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- . *We Have Never Been Modern*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Lidchi, Henrietta. "The Politics and Poetic of Exhibiting Other Cultures." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall, 153-208. London: Sage/Open University, 1997.
- Lloyd, Robert. "D-Day for the Hitler 'Downfall' Parodies?". Los Angeles: The Los Angeles Times, 2010.
- Lukach, Katherine M. "Transformative Encounters in the Works of Neil Gaiman." University of North Carolina, 2007.
- Massumi, Brian. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. USA: Duke University Press, 2002.
- McCarthy, Conal. *Exhibiting Maori: A History of Colonial Cultures of Display*. Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2007.
- McCarthy, Conal. "Hailing the Subject: Maori Visitors, Museum Display and the Sociology of Cultural Reception." *New Zealand Sociology* 21, no. 1 (2006): 108-30.
- Merriman, Nick. "Museum Visiting as a Cultural Phenomenon." In *The New Museology*, edited by Peter Vergo, 149-71. London: Reaktion Books, 1989.
- Miller, Daniel. "Artefacts and the Meaning of Things." In *Museums in the Material World*, edited by Simon J. Knell, 166-86. Oxon & New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Mintz, Ann. "Media and Museums: A Museum Perspective." In *The Virtual and the Real: Media in the Museum*, edited by Selma Thomas and Ann Mintz, 19-34. Washington: American Association of Museums, 1998.

- Nicholls, Brett, and Simon Ryan. "Playing in the Zone: Thirdspace in Jet Set Radio Future and Shenmue II." In *Ludic Moments Conference*. Sydney, 2003.
- Nicks, Trudy, ed. *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader*. Oxon: Routledge, 2003.
- O'Neill, Paul. "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse." In *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, edited by Judith Rugg and Michele Sedgwick, 13-28. Bristol: Interlect, 2007.
- O'Neill, Rachel. "Requiem for Set." In *Role. Play Catalogue*. Wellington: Enjoy Public Art Gallery, 2009.
- Phillips, Bruce. "Revised Thesis Proposal." Wellington: Victoria University, 2009.
- Phillips, Ruth B., and Christopher B. Steiner. *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Pinney, Christopher, and Nicholas Thomas, eds. *Beyond Aesthetics: Art and the Technologies of Enchantment*. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001.
- Priest, Julian. "Internet; Environment." In *The Aotearoa Digital Arts Reader*, edited by Stella Brennan and Su Ballard, 207-19. New Zealand: Aotearoa Digital Arts and Clouds, 2008.
- Prior, Nick. "Having One's Tate and Eating It: Transformations of the Museum in a Hypermodern Era." In *Art and Its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium*, edited by Andrew McClellan. Malden: Blackwell, 2003.
- Rand, Steven, and Heather Kouris, eds. *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating*. New York: apexart, 2007.
- Rice, Danielle. "Museums: Theory, Practice, and Illusion." In *Art and Its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium*, edited by Andrew McClellan, 77-95. Malden: Blackwell, 2003.
- Richardson, Laurel, and Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre. *Writing: A Method of Enquiry*. Edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005.
- Roberts, Lisa C. "Changing Practices of Interpretation." In *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift*, edited by Gail Anderson, 212-32. Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 2004.
- Roberts, Royston M. *Serendipity: Accidental Discoveries in Science*. New York: Wiley Science Editions, 1989.
- "Role. Play | Enjoy Public Art Gallery."
<http://www.enjoy.org.nz/node/1027>.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure. "Cyberspace, Virtuality and the Text." In *Cyberspace Textuality: Computer Technology and Literary Theory*, edited by Marie-Laure Ryan, 78-107. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999.
- Sandell, Richard. *Museums, Society, Inequality*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Schlatter, N. Elizabeth. "A New Spin: Are Djs, Rappers and Bloggers 'Curators'?" *Museum* (2010).
- Sklenars, Erica. 31 October 2009.
- Soja, Edward W. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996.

- Stake, Robert. "Qualitative Case Studies." In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 443-66. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005.
- Tapsell, Paul. "The Flight of Pareraututu: An Investigation of *Taonga* from a Tribal Perspective." *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 106, (1997): 323-74.
- "The Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0." UCLA,
<http://dev.cdh.ucla.edu/digitalhumanities/2009/05/29/the-digital-humanities-manifesto-20/>.
- "The Future Is Unwritten | Adam Art Gallery."
<http://www.adamartgallery.org.nz/past-exhibitions/thefuture/>.
- Thomas, Julian. "Phenomenology and Material Culture." In *Sage Handbook of Material Culture*, edited by Chris Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands and Patricia Spyer, 43-59. London: Sage Publications, 2006.
- Thomas, Nicholas. "Introduction." In *Beyond Aesthetics: Art and the Technologies of Enchantment*, edited by Christopher Pinney and Nicholas Thomas, 1-12. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001.
- Thomas, Selma, and Ann Mintz, eds. *The Virtual and the Real: Media in the Museum*. Washington: American Association of Museums, 1998.
- Thompson, E. P. *The Making of the English Working Class*. United Kingdom: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1963.
- Tilley, Chris. "Objectification." In *Sage Handbook of Material Culture*, edited by Chris Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands and Patricia Spyer, 60-73. London: Sage Publications, 2006.
- Tilley, Chris, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer, eds. *Sage Handbook of Material Culture*. London: Sage Publications, 2006.
- "Too Orangey for Crows | Enjoy Public Art Gallery."
<http://www.enjoy.org.nz/node/993>.
- Townsend, Melanie, ed. *Beyond the Box: Diverging Curatorial Practices*. Banff: Banff Centre Press, 2003.
- Wayers, Amanda. "Models, Modes and Exhibitionary Practices: From Anteriority to Immanence in Exhibition Development." Victoria University of Wellington, 2007.
- Weibel, Paul, and Bruno Latour. "Experimenting with Representation: *Iconoclasm* and *Making Things Public*." In *Exhibition Experiments*, edited by Sharon MacDonald and Paul Basu, 94-108. Malden: Blackwell, 2007.
- White, Michelle. "Curator as Producer." *Art Lies*, no. 59 (2009),
<http://www.artlies.org/article.php?id=1659&issue=59&s=1>.
- Woodward, Ian. "Theorising the Object-Seeking Social Actor: Object Transitioning, Sensual Practice and the Unfolding Materiality of Social Life." In *A Material Turn? Multi-disciplinary explorations*. Massey University, Wellington, 2009.
- "You Are Not a Curator." The New Curator,
<http://newcurator.com/2010/03/you-are-not-a-curator/>.