

Towards a curatorial continuum
or
How to fire a gun and time-travel

by

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Abstract

This thesis questions the ethics of curatorial agency: an issue that has plagued the profession since the influence of institutional critique of the 1960s. The proliferation of the ‘curatorial turn’ during the 1990s developed out of this legacy of institutional critique by grouping a diverse range of alternative practices that aimed to question curatorial agency. Curator Maria Lind defines this shift by making a methodological distinction between ‘curating’ and the ‘curatorial’. This is a binary division that posits curating as conventional practice that maintains hegemonic power structures and the curatorial as progressive and emancipatory. However, critics and curators such as Paul O’Neill and Nina Möntmann argue that methodologies of the curatorial turn have become compromised by personal, institutional, political and economic motivations. Due to this, it is apparent that a shift in methodology alone is not sufficient to question the ethics of curatorial agency and that Lind’s dichotomy of curating and the curatorial requires revision.

This study therefore explores *how* curators practice by studying different methodologies and to understand *why* curators practice by considering to what extent motivations influence the application of a curator’s methodology. The research specifically addresses these questions in relation to contemporary art curating within the broader framework of museum and heritage studies. To do so, I have put my own curatorial practice under scrutiny, using a range of mixed qualitative methods such as autoethnography, in order to delve deep into the decision-making process.

My research consists of six exhibition case studies that pertain to one of three common exhibition forms: group, solo or process-led exhibitions. Through a cross case analysis of these different exhibitions my findings suggest that there is not a distinct division between curating and the curatorial. Instead, I reveal that there is a complex interplay between spectrums of methodology and motivation. From this perspective, I argue for a new philosophy of curating that considers curatorial practice as an emergent spectrum charged with infinite possibilities, what I call the curatorial continuum.

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Introduction: Curating vs the Curatorial

In the 1950s the film director Jean-Luc Godard said that every “fictional film is a documentary of its actors”.¹ Godard insinuates that through close analysis of a film the practices of its performers can be revealed. If this metaphor is true, not just of film but also of other cultural products, what might we learn if we applied it to the outcome of curation? In a profession such as curation which is highly subjective, Godard’s metaphor is helpful as it opens up the possibility to further surmise: that if an exhibition might hold evidence of its own making then the *methodology* of its making and the maker’s *motivation* must be of crucial importance.

Yet despite this importance there has been no study that has investigated the relationship between methodology and motivation in curatorial practice. Therefore, this thesis studies different methodological modes of curating and the motivations that influence them by analysing seven years of my own practice.

This research investigation specifically addresses contemporary art curating framed within the larger context of museum and heritage studies. It addresses concerns shared across various disciplines throughout the cultural sector such as institutional critique, the ethics of agency and the definition of methodology and practice. These areas are of current importance because they question the power that practitioners and institutions have in influencing the official narratives of culture, history and the political consciousness of society. Reflecting the vast implications of these topics, my research also draws on insight gathered from artistic practice, art history, social psychology, anthropology, social history and political theory. Therefore, this thesis takes a unique research approach with the aim of contributing a fresh perspective on curatorial methodology and motivation.

I begin by explaining how my research enquiry grew out of my background of working within the museum and gallery sector in many different positions. In the literature review, I provide an overview of the history of curating as a means to reveal the dominant discussions and how they reveal gaps of knowledge within this field of

¹ Dennis Lim, “Miguel Gomes and Others Mix Drama and Reality,” *The New York Times*, August 20, 2010, sec. Movies, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/22/movies/22hybrid.html>.

study and throughout the museum, gallery and heritage sector. In particular, I investigate how the history of curating has been defined by a division between conventional and progressive methodologies of practice. I then consider the variety of motivations that influence curating ranging from personal incentives to institutional, economic and political agendas. Since there is no existing framework within the profession of curating, to analyse the mechanics of these motivations I turn to social psychology and in particular the cognitive theory of motivation. Lastly, I share my research design by explaining the relevance of autoethnography and my decision to focus on the three dominant exhibition forms: the solo, group and process-led exhibitions.

Background: Research Motivation

My motivation for pursuing this research topic has grown out of a strong interest in the politics of institutional critique and from my own experience working within art organisations. This research is also motivated by a desire to contribute towards curatorial discourse.

My interest in institutional critique developed during undergraduate study at art school. This interest was fuelled by an understanding that the most progressive artists in history have produced work in political contention with the art institutions of their time. This tension illustrates the fact that art institutions are spaces that should be challenged and that those employed to curate their programmes should be held accountable to their decisions.

While undertaking postgraduate study in museum studies, I became aware of the development of art institutions from the Enlightenment onwards. An understanding of museum history gave me insight into how institutional frameworks are greatly influential in mediating the meaning of art, its display and visitor encounter. During this time I also gained an understanding of social science research methodologies and methods that equip researchers with tools to identify biases and how to mitigate them.

In the following eleven years I worked in a number of large and small art organisations in a variety of roles while I pursued a career in curating. These positions included being an artist's assistant, exhibition installer, gallery docent, collection assistant, exhibition manager, curatorial intern, critic and an assistant curator. This

employment experience has been a formative influence in my chosen area of practice and research. While being roles of lower responsibility, I learnt that they had a significant influence on the creation and engagement of art. Most importantly they were also positions in which I was able to witness how curators practiced behind the scenes. This experience demystified the figure of the curator. I learnt that there are many motivations, influences and compromises that are seldom revealed to the public.

This insight has had a great influence upon the approach I have applied in my current role as the Senior Curator at Te Tuhi (TT) in Auckland. TT is recognised as one of New Zealand's leading contemporary art galleries, primarily due to its ability to realise ambitious artworks in close collaboration with artists and with little bureaucratic resistance or hesitancy towards new ideas. This function is greatly influenced by the fact that TT's governance is largely independent of its main funder, Auckland Council and also due to fine arts-educated employees who are attuned to the needs of artists. Within this framework the curatorial opportunity at TT is granted a significant amount of freedom but also criticality.

Throughout my career I have been an advocate for methodologies aligned to the so-called 'curatorial turn' as an answer for the issues that traditional museological practices have caused. During my time at TT I have had the privilege to experiment and develop my own personalised approach that borrows aspects from these methodologies. I have been particularly influenced by performative curating which considers how meaning is created via process and the awareness that the curator is a key creative practitioner who has influence on this process.

I strongly believe that there is no one championing methodology – rather what is important is the development of a philosophical approach within which a range of methods might be employed depending on the situation. I believe that it is also of the greatest importance that curatorial practice develops in tandem with artistic practice and it should work hard to benefit the latter as opposed to the former.

While I was developing this approach, it occurred to me that the agency of curating holds a significant amount of power. This agency has the authority to influence which artists are selected, which topics are included or excluded in the discourse and ultimately the creation of meaning in art and cultural heritage. I was concerned that

curators might not be questioning how they exercised this agency. My assumption was that poor adherence to curatorial methodology in the profession was resulting in discrimination towards artists and towards the public. However, these were just unsubstantiated suspicions and so I decided to explore these issues in greater depth through postgraduate research in order to find answers and the opportunity to develop new theoretical insights.

Literature Review: Methodology and Motivation

The purpose of this literature review is to locate a body of discourse relevant to my research and to identify gaps which I might be able to address. In particular, I aim to mine the available literature for perspectives on how and why curators practise. To do so, I first consider the *how* by investigating the evolution of curatorial methodologies. I then investigate the *why* by delving into motivations that influence curatorial decisions.

This literature review specifically addresses contemporary art curating framed within the larger context of museum and heritage studies. It addresses concerns shared across various disciplines throughout the cultural sector such as institutional critique, the ethics of agency and the definition of methodology and practice. For this reason it also incorporates theories and material from related disciplines outside of curating such as artistic practice and art history. Furthermore, due to significant gaps within the literature concerning contemporary art curating it has been necessary for me to glean insight from vastly different disciplines such as social psychology, social history, anthropology and political theory. This interdisciplinary focus provides a significant advantage by providing fresh perspectives on issues largely overlooked in relation to curatorial methodology and motivation.

Due to time constraints, my research is limited to literature derived mostly from Western European and North American sources. I acknowledge that this reduced focus overlooks the significant bodies of material produced in non-English speaking countries and also the substantial contributions by indigenous practitioners especially in Aotearoa New Zealand where I am based.

The scope of this literature review consolidates over five years' research, as the reading includes material consulted before I embarked on this study. I have scoured a

wide range of material including conference papers, magazine and journal articles, exhibition catalogues, artist publications, online blog posts and reviews, and well-known tomes. During this time I have seen the discourse grow exponentially but have noticed that the gap in literature concerning the ethics of curatorial agency has widened rather than narrowed. Therefore, throughout this review I highlight the fact that the existing literature is rife with theoretical generalities with little to no analysis of methodologies applied within practice and the motivations that influence them.

Curatorial Methodologies

There has been a wide variety of writing about the history, theory and practice of curating in museums and galleries.² Within this literature it has been a trend to define the profession's role by exploring the history and etymology of the word 'curator'. According to critic David Levi Strauss the job of the curator has historically been a "mixture of bureaucrat and priest".³ While this image of an altruistic caretaker is attractive, curator Kate Fowle contends that this position is not one of pure piety but imbued with great institutional power: "it evolved to mean 'gardia' or overseer . . . suggesting an inherent relationship between care and control."⁴

This Foucauldian perspective of the curator as an agent who has the power to govern culture has historically endowed the curator a significant degree of agency.⁵ It is the debate of this agency that has become the focal point of curatorial discourse since the institutional critique of the 1960s and 1970s. Alongside the social revolution, this wave of institutional critique challenged the art establishment's deeply embedded

² Christoph Tannert, ed., *Men In Black Handbook of Curatorial Practice and Revolver Archiv Fur Aktuelle Kunst* (Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, 2003); Terry Smith and Kate Fowle, *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2012); Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London, England: The MIT Press, 2012); Mick Wilson, "Curatorial Moments and Discursive Turns," in *Curating Subjects*, ed. Paul O'Neill (London: Open Editions, 2007), pp201–16, <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Curating-Subjects-Paul-ONeill/dp/0949004162>; N Serota, *Experience or Interpretation: The Dilemma of Museums of Modern Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996); Paula Marincola, ed., *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* (Philadelphia, PA : Chicago, IL: Reaktion Books, 2007); Jean-Hubert Martin et al., *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating*, ed. Steven Rand and Heather Kouris (New York: apexart, 2007); Peter Eleey, Elena Filipovic, and Juan Gaitán, *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating*, ed. Jens Hoffmann (Mousse Publishing, 2013); Mary Jane Jacob et al., *Show Time: The 50 Most Influential Exhibitions of Contemporary Art*, ed. Jens Hoffmann (New York, NY: D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, Inc., 2014); Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Ways of Curating* (London: Penguin, 2015); Nina Möntmann, ed., "Curating with Institutional 'Visions: A Roundtable Talk," in *Art and Its Institutions: Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006), 28–59. Ken Arnold, "From Caring to Creating: Curators Change Their Spots," in *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2013), <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118829059.wbihms214/abstract>. Halona Norton-Westbrook, "The Pendulum Swing: Curatorial Theory Past and Present," in *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2013), <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118829059.wbihms215/abstract>.

³ David Levi Strauss, "The Bias of the World: Curating After Szeemann & Hopps," in *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating* (New York: Apex Art, 2007), 15–25.

⁴ Kate Fowle, "Who Cares? Understanding the Role of the Curator Today," in *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating* (New York: Apex Art, 2007), 26.

⁵ Fowle, "Who Cares? Understanding the Role of the Curator Today."

prejudice against women and oppressed racial groups.⁶ During this time the curator within the traditional museum was no longer the only authority on art and culture as artists found a contrary voice in collectives, activism and the power to exhibit themselves by forming artist-run galleries.

In the decades that followed from the 1970s through until the 1990s artists were increasingly invited by museums as guest curators to liberate their institutions from questionable histories and stale practices⁷ – what curator Miwon Kwon terms ‘critical services’.⁸ The exemplar of this trend was the exhibition *Mining the Museum* (1992) by artist Fred Wilson. In this project he curated a selection of items held in the Maryland Historical Society’s collection, revealing the institution’s part in perpetuating biased histories of slavery and colonisation.⁹ The rise of the artist as curator also emerged in tandem with this movement. While there is a long tradition of artists curating exhibitions, ranging from Marcel Duchamp to Andy Warhol,¹⁰ this was a different wave of artist curators: typically artists who developed curatorial methodologies into their practice or those who got their start in artist-run galleries and then climbed up within the ranks of traditional museums.¹¹

This opportunity was also taken advantage of by “foot-loose and untethered”¹² independent curators such as Harald Szeeman and Walter Hopps.¹³ Szeemann and Hopps’ model of the *ausstellungsmacher* (exhibition maker) emphasised the importance of establishing a relationship with the artist so that both curator and artist can create a radical remodelling of exhibition presentation.¹⁴ Their experimental revision of exhibition conventions was based on the idea that a curator who invents avant-garde exhibition-making practices can propel innovation in art.¹⁵

⁶ Stella Rollig, “Contemporary Art Practices and the Museum: To Be Reconciled at All?,” in *Beyond the Box: Diverging Curatorial Practice* (Banff: The Banff Center Press, 2003), 97–107; Kynaston McShine, *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect* (New York: MoMA, 1999); Sven-Olov Wallenstein, “Institutional Desires,” in *Art and Its Institutions: Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006), 114–22.

⁷ Benjamin Buchloh, “The Museum of Marcel Broodthaers,” in *Museums by Artists* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983); McShine, *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*.

⁸ Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2004), 50.

⁹ Lisa G Corrin, *Mining the Museum: An Installation by Fred Wilson* (Baltimore: The Contemporary, 1994).

¹⁰ Buchloh, “The Museum of Marcel Broodthaers”; McShine, *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*.

¹¹ Smith and Fowle, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*; O’Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*; McShine, *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*; Jens Hoffmann, “The Next Documenta Should Be Curated by an Artist,” 2003, http://www.e-flux.com/projects/next_doc/index.html; Gwynneth Porter, “This Biennale Has Been Curated by an Artist,” Access Date 2004, <http://www.telecomprospect2004.org.nz/opinions/gwynneth.pdf>.

¹² JJ Charlesworth, “Curating Doubt,” in *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2007), 96.

¹³ Robert Storr, “The Exhibitionists,” *Frieze Magazine*, 2005, 25.

¹⁴ Obrist, *Ways of Curating*.

¹⁵ Fowle, “Who Cares? Understanding the Role of the Curator Today,” 30.

And while Szeemann and Hopps both held directorships in museums and significant art events they became, as critic David Levi Strauss writes, “desired renegades” and their form of exhibition making became “intermittently palatable, to the conservative institutions of the art world”.¹⁶

The Szeemann and Hopps approach thus emphasised that the curator has a creative role in crafting an exhibition’s form. From this point on the emphasis of the ‘exhibition as form’ became a point of great innovation but also created significant contention as some argued that it accentuated the creative supremacy of the curator over artists. As artist, curator and critic Paul O’Neill writes: “the curator began to define art’s framework of production while asserting its overarching exhibitionary context.”¹⁷

The ‘curatorial turn’ that emerged in the wake of these artist-led and independent curating strategies over the successive decades from 60s into the 90s, signalled a very clear departure away from conventional modes of curating that followed a museological tradition. Curator Maria Lind succinctly encapsulates this influential shift by claiming that there are two types of practice defined between the difference of the verb ‘curating’ and the adjective ‘the curatorial’:

‘Curating’ is business as usual . . . ‘the curatorial’ goes further, implying a methodology that takes art as its starting point but then situates it in relation to specific contexts, times, and questions in order to challenge the status quo.¹⁸

There is an ethical divide at play between Lind’s two distinctions – highlighting that the lack of rigour in ‘curating’ allows systems of power to become hidden and veiled as opposed to ‘the curatorial’ that actively engages with the critique of such impositions. Lind claims, that such approaches can rupture the stagnating function of art institutions as a “parking house for artworks”¹⁹ by “using the institution against the grain of what is expected.”²⁰

Lind’s assertion of a divide between curating and the curatorial is modelled upon theorist Chantal Mouffe’s concept of the political and its agonistic potential within

¹⁶ Strauss, “The Bias of the World: Curating After Szeemann & Hopps.”

¹⁷ O’Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, 28.

¹⁸ Smith and Fowle, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*. Maria Lind, “To Show or Not to Show,” *Mousse Magazine*, November 2011, <http://moussemagazine.it/articolo.mm?id=759>.

¹⁹ Möntmann, “Curating with Institutional Visions: A Roundtable Talk,” 2006, 58.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

art.²¹ According to Mouffe the antagonistic is the “undecidability which pervades every order . . . where different hegemonic projects are confronted, without any possibility of final reconciliation.”²² This proposition is influenced by philosopher and activist Claude Lefort’s distinction of the political being “the symbolic ordering of social relations . . . ‘the mise en forme’ of human coexistence.”²³ Mouffe’s theory of the political and antagonism also shares some close similarity to philosopher Jacques Rancière’s definition of the political and dissensus, which he describes as a space of unresolved tension.²⁴ Both theories reinvestigate the meaning of democracy as a space not of consensus but of political contestation.

Therefore, viewed from Lind’s theoretical lens the methodologies that have grown under the curatorial turn can be characterised as alternative approaches concerned with antagonising conservative power relations with the goal of achieving a sense of dissensus within democracy. It is important to highlight here that methodologies of the curatorial turn are rarely described as ‘methodologies’ within the literature. The reason for this is that curatorial practice within this movement is less defined and adaptively changes from exhibition to exhibition.

It is possible to conceive of a range of curatorial methodologies that are “no way unified but rather marked by [their] diversity and only connected by a set of family resemblances”.²⁵ This set of resemblances are unified by practices that “disturb existing power”²⁶ by incorporating aspects of the interdisciplinary, discursive, collaborative, and performative. All of which have an ideological lineage that stems from key bodies of post-modernist theory and their application in disciplines such as politics, linguistics, education and the social sciences.

Other important methodological traits of the curatorial turn include an emphasis on transparency, process, shared authorship and demystifying institutional practice. They are practices emphasising that curating is “the result of not so much . . . of curators as it is the fruit of the labor of a network of agents.”²⁷

²¹ Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking The World Politically*, 1 edition (London ; New York: Verso, 2013); Chantal Mouffe, “Artistic Activism and Agonistic Politics,” accessed June 30, 2016, <http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/p/political-environment/artistic-activism-and-agonistic-politics-chantal-mouffe.html>.

²² Mouffe, “Artistic Activism and Agonistic Politics.”

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. Steven Corcoran (London/New York: Continuum, n.d.).

²⁵ O’Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, 127.

²⁶ Lind, “Active Cultures: Maria Lind on the Curatorial.”

²⁷ Ibid.

Interdisciplinary

The interdisciplinary premise seeks out engagement across traditionally separate disciplines by using the gallery or museum as a 'laboratory'. By referencing the cultural theorist Homi Bhabha, the designer and critic Jane Rendell goes further to claim that it encourages awareness of incompetence and produces a "destabilizing engagement with dominant power structures allowing the emergence of new and often uncertain forms of knowledge."²⁸ Similarly, in explaining the interdisciplinary laboratories curated by Walter Zanini, curator Cristina Freire explains that they function as an 'operational space' . . . [in which] the museum assumes an active position rather than a exclusive, memory-warehousing body.²⁹ The interdisciplinary methodology is most famously apparent in the practice of curator Hans Ulrich Obrist such as his project *Bridge the Gap* (2001-5) which was an annual initiative that brought together experts from various fields to explore how a conference format could be a laboratory for a deriving a "dynamic learning system".³⁰

Discursive

The discursive methodology is principally concerned with creating social inclusion exclusively through free and open dialogue.³¹ The discursive methodology emphasises the need to create non-hierarchical forms of conversation that allow multiple voices to be heard.³² The most definitive and influential curatorial project that acted from the discursive position is undoubtedly *Conversations at the Castle* (1996) curated by Mary Jane Jacob, which was an artist residency programme and series of new site-specific commissions in Atlanta, Georgia, that incorporated an ambitious program of public conversations and a symposium over dinner. Jacob's alternative format created a reciprocal pedagogy between the curator, artists and the public³³ in which "the untrained, non-art-academic experience – often deemed less valid by the museum – would form the core".³⁴

²⁸ Jane Rendell, "Critical Spatial Practice: Curating, Editing, Writing," in *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, ed. Judith Rugg and Michèle Sedgwick (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2008), 60.

²⁹ Cristina Freire, "Territory for Freedom: A Museum of Contemporary Art under Military Dictatorship in Brazil," in *Curating with Light Luggage* (Frankfurt: Revolver, 2005), 13.

³⁰ Hans-Ulrich Obrist and Akiko Miyake, "Bridge the Gap," in *Men in Black: Handbook of Curatorial Practice*, ed. Christoph Tannert and Ute Tischler (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2004), 129; Hans-Ulrich Obrist, *Shifts, Expansions, and Uncertainties: The Example of Cedric Price*, Curating with Light Luggage (Frankfurt: Revolver, 2005), 65.

³¹ Wilson, "Curatorial Moments and Discursive Turns," 204.

³² Bruce Barber, "Littoralist Art Practice and Communicative Action," Khyber Lecture Series, 1996, http://www.imageandtext.org.nz/bruce_work_squat_essays.html.

³³ For a critique of the discursive approach see: Monika Szewczyk, "Art of Conversation, Part I," *E-Flux Journal*, no. 3 (February 2009), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/37>; Wilson, "Curatorial Moments and Discursive Turns."

³⁴ Mary Jane Jacob and Michael Brenson, eds., *Conversations at the Castle: Changing Audiences and Contemporary Art* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1998), 24.

Collaborative

The collaborative methodology is the act of many individuals working together towards shared concerns and identifying as a group with the aim of creating “alternate ways of producing knowledge.”³⁵ The collaborative methodology promises a dissolve of authorship between the artist and curator by suggesting a morphing of their traditional professional roles.³⁶ The best examples of the collaborative methodology typically exist as independent organisations that function outside of conventional art institutions. One such example is the curatorial collective rum46 based in Aarhus, Denmark. Rum46 is an open-ended collaborative group of artists and curators who collectively curate and organise a diverse programme of public exhibitions, events, services and collective meals.³⁷

Performative

The focus of performative curating is not on the production of a finished cultural product but rather the curatorial process that influences its creation.³⁸ Crucial to this understanding of a performative process is an awareness of the implicit signifiers that lie apparent but inaudibly performed in the act of speech. As curator Katharina Schlieben explains the performative is “understood as the constitution of a meaning through an act or a certain practice.”³⁹ She reveals that what is implicit will not only become apparent in a final product, but more importantly *constructs* its meaning. Therefore, performative curating requires the “procedural and productive realisation”⁴⁰ of an exhibition to be transparently revealed and explicitly considered but also the declaration of a curator's critical position and an acknowledgement of others that may have provided influence or exchange.⁴¹ Obrist's *Utopia Station* has been touted as an example of performative curating.⁴² *Utopia Station* was a large

³⁵ Maria Lind, “The Collaborative Turn,” in *Taking the Matter Into Common Hands: Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices*, ed. Maria Lind, Johanna Billing, and Lars Nilsson (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007), 16.

³⁶ Jole Wilcke, “‘Collective Curating’ - Curating in an Extended Field” (Collective Curating, Center for contemporary Art, Aarhus, Denmark, 2006), http://www.rum46.dk/collective/texts_jole.html; Katharina Schlieben, “Polyphonous Language and Construction of Identity: Its Dynamic and Its Crux,” in *Taking the Matter Into Common Hands: Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices*, ed. Johanna Billing, Maria Lind, and Lars Nilsson (London: Black Dog Publishing, n.d.), 34.

³⁷ Anja Raithel, Hanne Lindstrom, and Grete Aagaard, “Notes on Hospitality, Community and Counter-Publicity Related to Collective Curating as Practice and Method” (Collective Curating, Center for contemporary Art, Aarhus, Denmark, 2006), http://www.rum46.dk/collective/texts_hospitality.html; Wilcke, “‘Collective Curating’ - Curating in an Extended Field.”

³⁸ Katharina Schlieben, “Curating Per-Form,” *Kunstverein München*, 2007, http://www.kunstverein-muenchen.de/03_ueberlegungen_considerations/en_performative_curating.pdf; Claire Doherty, “Performative Curating,” in *Sculpture Projects Muenster 07*, ed. Brigitte Franzen, Kasper König, and Carina Plath (W. König, 2007), pp413–14.

³⁹ Schlieben, “Curating Per-Form,” 1.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁴¹ Nina Möntmann, “Curating with Institutional ‘Visions: A Roundtable Talk,” in *Art and Its Institutions: Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006), 28–59; Doherty, “Performative Curating”; Schlieben, “Curating Per-Form.”

⁴² Doherty, “Performative Curating.”

nomadic exhibition designed to be added to and changed at every venue it is exhibited. The concept being that the project itself is a 'research engine' which in its final evolved state has little to do with its original inception.⁴³

Is the curatorial turn a dead end?

There should be no question that these methodologies of the curatorial turn have significantly contributed new understandings of, and precedents for, how a curator in partnership with others can create new contexts through which art can be produced and experienced. However, the fact that such practices have been absorbed into institutional practice should give us reason to be cautious.

For the curatorial turn also encompasses approaches that have been grouped under the banner of the 'new institutionalism,' a term originally used to champion innovative museum practices. Critics and curators such as Nina Möntmann argue that the new institutionalism has since become synonymous with promoting the appearance of institutional critique but in actual fact participating in the neo-liberal driven event economy and other capitalist focused prerogatives.⁴⁴

Another problem with the curatorial turn is that it defines a methodology which, contrary to its intention, has become a source of hegemonic power itself. It is possible that part of this issue is found within Lind's strict division of curating and the curatorial which is comparable to Rancière's argument of how the two propositions of the 'end of politics' and the 'return of politics' acts to create:

two symmetrical implications that produce the same effect . . . the effacing of the concept of politics itself . . . [and] is therefore scarcely more than a simple debate over the appropriate order in which to read the presuppositions of political philosophy, for the purpose of . . . annihilating politics.⁴⁵

This argument is not wholly transferable to curating as it concerns specifics within political philosophy. What it does highlight is the fallacy of establishing diametrically opposed models of practice that rather than liberate actually efface the formalisation of practice itself. By this I mean that the division between curating and the curatorial is problematic because it essentially polices one form of practice over another – a

⁴³ Obrist, *Shifts, Expansions, and Uncertainties: The Example of Cedric Price*, 75.

⁴⁴ Nina Möntmann, "The Rise and Fall of New Institutionalism: Perspectives on a Possible Future," Access Date 2007, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0407/moentmann/en/print>.

⁴⁵ Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, n.d., 42–44.

situation which gives rise to political factions that look after their own self-interest rather than exploring the possibilities held in tension between such resistances.

By virtue of their very nature, methodologies are ideological constructs and ideologies as we know are impossible to truly attain. The political philosopher Alain Badiou describes this, the possibility of the impossible, as being the realm of the political. He claims that the goal of the political is not to achieve the impossible but to create formalisations that seek to establish new possibilities.⁴⁶

In light of this, it is no longer satisfactory to blindly trust practices born of the curatorial turn. Just because an exhibition has been created in an alternative format, how do we know there has been a shift in power dynamic between institutions, artists and the public? How do we know if there has been a true challenge to curatorial agency? We do not know the answer to these questions because there has been no comparative analysis to test the difference between conventional *curating* and methodologies of *the curatorial turn* since the absorption of such practices into mainstream museums and galleries.

Therefore, the first aim of this thesis is to do just that – to question *how* curators practise by asking whether there is any ideological difference between the two dominant methodological modes of curating and the curatorial. However, an investigation into methodology alone will only reveal one component of this issue. As the predicament of the new institutionalism illustrates, it is clear that a reform of methodology alone is not the answer. In the next section, I argue that a deeper knowledge of motivation is the key to exploring new possibilities in curatorial practice.

Motivation

In this section I will reveal that due to the freedom that curating often allows, it is possible to be a practicing curator and willingly not adhere to, or be aware of, the rich methodological history of the curatorial turn – or, even worse – to perpetuate the rhetoric of such approaches but without actually implementing it in the reality of one's practice.⁴⁷ Herein lies a dilemma in curating, where practice can be simply the

⁴⁶ Alain Badiou, "À La Recherche Du Réel Perdu: In Search of the Lost Real" (Lecture, University of Auckland, November 25, 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrnl69UoQ8I>.

⁴⁷ O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, 32–37, 127.

exercised whim of the practitioner with no established system to analyse the influence of various agendas. Surprisingly, to my knowledge there is no such framework that has been developed specifically to analyse the motivations that influence curatorial methodology.

However, before we can entertain this idea, we need to first examine what types of agendas are at play within curating and we need to establish some understanding of what motivation is and how it functions psychologically. To launch this investigation, I first consider the personal, institutional, economic and political agendas which influence curatorial practice that are highlighted within the literature. I then consider the psychological basis of motivation through the cognitive theory and its potential for decoding incentives that influence curating.

Personal Curatorial Motivations

It can be extremely difficult to accurately discern a curator's personal motivation. However, it is common throughout the literature grouped within the curatorial turn for curators to exercise a self-reflexive position by being open about the process behind their practice. Nevertheless, while a curator might appear to be transparent one must always read between the lines and judge the discrepancies between words and works.⁴⁸

Paul O'Neill voices concern about this trend of curatorial demystification and suspects it might be sometimes used as a smoke screen for other issues such as desires for "celebrity, economic advantages . . . career advancement for artist friends, and the influence of the art market."⁴⁹ O'Neill grounds this statement upon Roland Barthes scrutiny of myth construction "as a social and cultural construction that is passed off as natural, in which certain relations to power are obscured."⁵⁰ Critic David Balzer even suggests that "a willingness to discuss the contradictions, even the hypocrisies, of contemporary curating . . . might be the primary characteristic of the star curator."⁵¹ Reflecting on this intelligent yet sly prerogative has led curator Cuauhtémoc Medina to concede that "curating is an art of compromise."⁵² He continues to add:

⁴⁸ Charlesworth, "Curating Doubt," 97.

⁴⁹ O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, 93.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 37.

⁵¹ David Balzer, *Curationism: How Curating Took Over the Art World and Everything Else* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2014), 7–14.

⁵² Cuauhtémoc Medina, "Another Hysterical Attempt to Theorize about Defeat: Untimely Remarks on the Fate of the XXV Bienal de Sao Paulo's Curatorial Team," in *Beyond the Box: Diverging Curatorial Practice* (Banff: The Banff Center Press, 2003), 70.

one of the powerful reasons why people get addicted to curatorship . . . is that they have . . . developed taste for the 1,001 ways in which ill intentions (sometimes) miraculously lead to good exhibitions . . . curatorship is the creative sublimation of such forces as the craving for prestige of bourgeois patrons, the lust for legitimisation and cultural sanitation of bureaucracies, the quest of the new hegemonic projects of the old nationalism, and finally the itching of those two olds all-pervading erotic forces – greed and vanity.⁵³

Institutional, Economic and Political Motivations

Beyond a curator's personal motivations the institution is also a significant force in influencing curatorial practice. For after all, it is the art institution that is responsible for employing curators and creating the system in which they practise.⁵⁴ It is essentially institutions that hold the power, via resources and funding, to control the collective memory of communities and cultures.⁵⁵ However, this power play that both the institution and curator is embroiled within is not a clear dichotomy but rather a labyrinth of shifting economic and political power relations.

From the 1980s through into the 1990s many westernised countries witnessed the demise of the welfare state due to neo-liberalism. During this time public art institutions were forced into the position of discarding their educational role, previously unburdened by economic pressure, to adopting corporate models of management and function.⁵⁶ The model of this reform is widely attributed as being the Museum of Modern Art in New York which proved successful in raising “large amounts of their budget by themselves, through adjoining restaurants, gift shops, higher entrance fees, renting out their space for corporate events.”⁵⁷ According to artist Andrea Fraser, the result of these income-producing activities affected not just the source of funding but forced cultural institutions to be part of the “entertainment and luxury goods industries”.⁵⁸

This corporate model also resulted in a competitive scramble for visibility and expansion – what economists term the ‘economy of attention’.⁵⁹ Within this economy

⁵³ Ibid. 70.

⁵⁴ Wallenstein, “Institutional Desires,” 120.

⁵⁵ Nina Möntmann, “Art and Its Institutions,” in *Art and Its Institutions: Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006), 11.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 8–9.

⁵⁷ Rollig, “Contemporary Art Practices and the Museum: To Be Reconciled at All?,” 102.

⁵⁸ Fraser, “A Museum is not a Business. it is run in a Business Like Fashion.”

⁵⁹ Rollig, “Contemporary Art Practices and the Museum: To Be Reconciled at All?,” 104.

of attention, art institutions compete amongst each other with blockbuster programmes that aim to attract a generalised no-name ‘public’. In this system, visitor numbers become a currency of not only money but also that of validation indicating an institution’s importance to society. This new currency of attention is, as Fraser states, not simply about generating money but fuelling a certain marketing logic⁶⁰ – a logic that in essence homogenises what is a diverse public into a pliant populace of consumers within global capitalism.⁶¹

The economy of attention even envelops curatorial projects and organisations that take part outside of the traditional museum walls such as ephemeral, time-based, community collaboration and site-specific interventions that, as curator Claire Doherty claims, can act as “spectacles . . . within an event culture that is characterised by expendability, by immediate accessibility and seemingly insatiable consumption.”⁶² This is particularly the case of the marketing approach that is visible in international biennales that essentially take part in tourism and cultural capital especially in countries outside of the art world centres of North America and Western Europe as Medina explains: “biennales are born in great part due to the local elite’s desire to promote themselves on an international scale, either in the pursuit of investment or the search of a symbolic role for cities or states.”⁶³

In addition, Möntmann states the global consumer trait is transposed upon the hiring of curators. For “it is particularly the case that sound experience frequently counts less in curators’ favour than their global presence and networks and their PR and management qualities.”⁶⁴ On top of this reduction of professional rigour, there is an increasing need for short development and research periods for curators to organise exhibitions.⁶⁵ Under this corporatised ‘economy of attention’ model, it is also more common for curators to promote the work of a few well established artists as drawcards or to raise the profile of an institution⁶⁶ – what I term the using artists as ‘institutional trophies’ as the main rationale for their selection rather than a sincere appreciation of their work.

⁶⁰ Andrea Fraser, “A Museum Is Not a Business. It Is Run in a Business like Fashion,” in *Beyond the Box: Diverging Curatorial Practice* (Banff: The Banff Center Press, 2003), 114.

⁶¹ Möntmann, “Art and Its Institutions,” 9.

⁶² Claire Doherty, “Art in the Life of the City: London Stories,” 2008, 4, <http://onedaysculpture.org.nz/assets/images/reading/Claire%20Doherty.pdf>.

⁶³ Medina, “Another Hysterical Attempt to Theorize about Defeat: Untimely Remarks on the Fate of the XXV Bienal de Sao Paulo’s Curatorial Team,” 82–83.

⁶⁴ Möntmann, “Art and Its Institutions,” 9.

⁶⁵ Obrist, *Shifts, Expansions, and Uncertainties: The Example of Cedric Price*, 74.

⁶⁶ Möntmann, “Curating with Institutional Visions: A Roundtable Talk,” 2006, 38.

It is clear that there are various agendas that influence curating despite what form an exhibition might take and regardless of what methodology a curator might adopt. However, by only sharing that these influences exist only addresses part of the problem. It is important that we also form strategies to outmanoeuvre them and to do so it is imperative that we understand the psychological mechanics of motivation and how it informs the decisions we make.

Cognitive Theory of Motivation

According to social psychologists Edward L. Deci and Richard Ryan, there are different forms of motivation that *move* us to certain thoughts, behaviour and social relations. Their research has mostly been used within education but I believe there could also be relevant application within curation.⁶⁷ Deci and Ryan argue that motivation is a purposeful cognitive process and an important aspect in determining agency and social relations.

In their cognitive theory of motivation they claim that motivation is driven by two types of incentives: the intrinsic and the extrinsic. Intrinsic incentive is simply the motivation of practicing in a certain way because it is “inherently interesting or enjoyable”⁶⁸ from which one gains feelings of “competence and autonomy”.⁶⁹ In education, for example, the intrinsic incentive manifests itself when a student is driven by their own desire to learn new knowledge or gain new skills. Intrinsic incentives are characteristically ideological, principled, undeterred by contrary forces and “moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards”.⁷⁰

In contrast, extrinsic incentives are motivations predicated by external forces and by a competitive spirit to attain tangible rewards such as a pay rise or more intangible rewards such as gaining recognition by others. As opposed to the intrinsic, the extrinsic incentive “leads to a separable outcome” because it is dependent upon factors outside of the individual in order to fulfil a reward.⁷¹ For this reason, extrinsic

⁶⁷ Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, “Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions,” *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, no. 25 (2000): 54–55.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

incentives are defined by agency that is controlled by others over the individual and vice versa.

In their paper *Self-Determination Theory*, Deci and Ryan conclude that since intrinsic incentives are driven by self-defined motivations it naturally leads to higher quality and more creative results because it is more individually empowering and self-fulfilling.⁷² Whereas extrinsic incentives, by virtue of being a motivation dependent on external factors, is somewhat limited by the competition available or by the agendas of others.

However, while extrinsic incentives can represent motivations of less integrity with corresponding poor quality it can also lead to forms of “active, agentic states”.⁷³

Returning to an educational example Deci and Ryan state:

Students can perform extrinsically motivated actions with resentment, resistance, and disinterest or, alternatively, with an attitude of willingness that reflects an inner acceptance of the value or utility of a task. In the former case –the classic case of extrinsic motivation – one feels externally propelled into action; in the later case, the extrinsic goal is self-endorsed and thus adopted with a sense of volition.⁷⁴

They continue to explain that in this situation teachers cannot always rely upon a student to form intrinsic incentives because not all topics are enjoyable or of personal interest and therefore it is important to also engage extrinsic tactics. Furthermore, subsequent studies by Deci and Ryan and others suggest that intrinsic and extrinsic incentive are not mutually exclusive but are engaged in a complex set of relations.

For instance, the two incentives can become inseparable when extrinsic rewards are given for goals attained through intrinsic driven activities. In this instance, the intrinsic is encouraged through extrinsic means and can thereby influence future behaviour to be of a mixed incentive. In other words, “social and environmental factors” can also “facilitate [rather than only] undermine intrinsic motivation”.⁷⁵ Conversely, there are also findings suggesting that extrinsic incentives can become

⁷² Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, “Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being,” *American Psychologist* 55, no. 1 (2000): 68–78.

⁷³ Deci and Ryan, “Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions,” 55.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

integrated with intrinsic goals.⁷⁶ There are also contradictory findings that suggest extrinsic motivations in the form of deadlines, directives and competition diminish the intrinsic due to a loss of agency.⁷⁷ Therefore, motivations may have a verifying scale of complexity in which contradictory forces work in tandem or in multifaceted ways.

There are many other theories of motivation that are far beyond the limitations of my research to explore. I am also not qualified in social psychology and as such, I am cautious not to overstate my understanding of Deci and Ryan's studies or to misappropriate their theory. In saying so, the basic premise that they outline has some interesting correlations to my observations within the field of curation and I argue that there is much understanding to gain from adopting Deci and Ryan's two incentive distinctions. The cognitive theory of motivation gives us a helpful lens through which to explain an aspect of curatorial practice that has been overlooked within the profession so far.

Research Design:

Questions, Methodology, Case Studies and Analysis

To me the beauty of research . . . [is] going into an area of darkness in order to see what might be there . . . its like dreaming in a way . . . when you go to sleep and dream you don't know what's going to come to mind.⁷⁸

— Martin Edmond

Throughout the literature review I revealed that there are two arguments that have dominated the discourse of curating: a) that curating is governed by a choice of methodology and that there is a division between curating and the curatorial; b) that curating is also influenced by a curator's motivation regardless of the methodology that a curator claims to practise. I found that while there was plenty of theoretical and anecdotal reference to these dominant issues there was no literature concerned with investigating them within applied practice.⁷⁹ It occurred to me that the sector is missing out on deeper nuances and more complex insight into how these factors actually pan out within curating. Therefore, my research aims are to explore the following questions:

⁷⁶ Deci and Ryan, "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions."

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Martin Edmond, "Martin Edmond," *Radio New Zealand*, accessed October 20, 2015, <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/saturday/audio/20153036/martin-edmond>.

⁷⁹ O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*.

1. How do curators practise? And in particular, whether there is any difference between the two methodological modes of curating and the curatorial?
2. Why do curators practise? Specifically, considering to what extent do intrinsic and extrinsic incentives influence the application of a curator's methodology?

However, it is a great challenge to investigate these questions because after all curating contemporary art is not a science that can be examined in an objective manner. It is a discipline without a cohesive form. It is fluid, it is adaptable, it is emergent and it is highly subjective and personal. With this realisation the problem arises how might we understand contemporary art curation? And for my purposes in this thesis, how might we understand curating not as something independent from art but as a crucial component of its making – an active participation that has ethical implications.⁸⁰

Research Methodologies

Since these research questions require specific details about curating it seemed most appropriate to adopt qualitative research methodologies to record and analyse such material. In this section I will clarify how this search for research methodologies led me to consider what types of material were important and the autoethnography approach that I would use to record it. I will then explain the ethical considerations of my research and how these assisted me in my choice of the phenomenological analysis methodology and the cross case synthesis method to decode my case studies. To conclude, I will then discuss how my research is incorporated within the chapter structure of this thesis.

Research material and Autoethnography

My research will consist of primary and secondary sources of material concerning curating. My primary research focuses on a self-reflexive analysis of my own curatorial practice through six exhibition case studies. To do this I maintained field notes and analytically studied the communicative material published for the exhibitions including any independent reviews and criticism. My secondary research involved reading published literature in the form of magazine and journal articles, exhibition catalogues and relevant dissertations. This was an important component of

⁸⁰ Elena Filipovic, "What Is an Exhibition?," in *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating*, ed. Jens Hoffmann (Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2013).

the research process as it kept me informed of the breadth of curatorial practice internationally and any new developments or information that impacted my enquiry.

By studying my own practice as primary research, I had unrestricted access to subjective and objective aspects of the decision making process in a way that I would not have if I were to examine another's work. However, making sense of this information is challenging because it requires deconstructing personal narratives in order to untangle relationships and reveal possible biases.

This led me to consider autoethnography as a relevant approach to writing. Autoethnography amalgamates autobiography and ethnography to create a research methodology that "seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience".⁸¹ The key to this method is acknowledging the subjective influence of the researcher and the context they are working within. Applied within the social sciences, autoethnography is usually used in situations where the researcher is working closely or embedded within a community or group with the aim of being a participant observer who can reflexively analyse cultural values and beliefs.⁸²

Autoethnography is driven with the aim of treating "research as a politically and socially-conscious act" and one that emphasises that the research is both process and product.⁸³ This awareness is perfectly suited to recording the making of exhibitions as O'Neill states that exhibitions:

are political tools for maintaining the status quo—modern ritual settings that reinforce identities . . . exhibitions always need to be understood as institutional utterances within a larger culture industry.⁸⁴

Autoethnography also acknowledges the subjective influence of the researcher and builds in reflexive methods to acknowledge this implication and what bearing it might bring upon the research itself. However, I have been required to adapt these methods slightly so that it is relevant to my subject and field of study. These are the three main methods of autoethnography and how I have adapted them for my research:

⁸¹ Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner, "Autoethnography: An Overview," *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12, no. 1 (November 24, 2010): 1, <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589>.

⁸² Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, "Autoethnography."

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁸⁴ O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, 91.

- Use of field notes to capture personal experiences: my research also includes recording curatorial methodologies and their application in practice.
- Participant interviews: my research did not require interviews.
- Analysis of artefacts: my research included all material relating to an exhibition including printed and published material, artworks, exhibition design and institutional communicative material (wall texts, essays, stated aims and motivations in speeches or public program events).

Autoethnography also encourages writing in a narrative style that engages the reader and is therefore accessible to a broad audience.⁸⁵ Since my research is primarily industry-specific, I will be using specific terms and language used to engage with practicing curators. However, in order for my research to be applicable to practitioners throughout the museum, gallery and heritage sector, I have used the narrative approach to a certain degree. The narrative style also allows the writing to flow intuitively, not unlike the experience of making an exhibition as Boris Groys writes: “Every exhibition tells a story”⁸⁶ and as chief narrative creator the curator’s “every mediation is suspect . . . as someone standing between the artwork and its viewer”.⁸⁷ Thus, by unpacking my own exhibition narratives I might be able to reveal the curatorial mechanics that mediate the relationship between the institution and artist, and between the artwork and public.

Therefore, the writing in my case studies is a succinct record of my practice that ranges from formal essay writing to moments of casual reflection as my thoughts ebbed and flowed throughout the exhibition making process. It is illustrated with examples of procedural documents, unsubstantiated anecdotes, descriptions of audience experience, photographic documentation of artworks, recollections of dreams, anxieties and contradictions.

This approach is also somewhat similar to that employed by the anthropologist James Clifford, well known for his work on indigenous museums and curating, who often inserts first-hand observation and poetic elements in his work.⁸⁸ In this approach

⁸⁵ Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, “Autoethnography.”

⁸⁶ Boris Groys, *Art Power* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: The MIT Press, 2013), 44.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁸⁸ James Clifford, *On the Edges of Anthropology: Interviews*, 10 vols., Prickly Paradigm Series (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2003); James Clifford, *Returns: Becoming Indigenous in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); James Clifford, “The Times and Tasks of the Curator: Engaging with Indigenous Temporalities, Histories and Futures,” in

Clifford argues that there is a necessity to seek out forms of research that are not homogenous, linear or conclusive. He explains:

My intellectual approach . . . is not to resolve the antinomy, to search for some sort of middle space that I take to be true and rational, and then defend it systematically. I believe in dialectical interaction . . . My method is more like tacking, as one might with sailing. It's going to out to one extreme and back across to another extreme, thus making some headway.⁸⁹

Others have also employed a similar method such as Martin Edmond in *Dark Night: Walking with McCahon*⁹⁰ or Robert Macfarlane in *The old ways*.⁹¹ This literary style of writing as research is ideal for unpacking first-hand experiences as a meditation on culture, people and place.

Ethics and Analysis Methodologies

Since the focus of my research does not involve a study that affects the wellbeing of any human or animal subjects I do not require formal ethics approval from Victoria University of Wellington. In New Zealand there is a code of ethics concerning Museum practice published by Museums Aotearoa Te Tari o Ngā Whare Taonga o te Motu.⁹² However, while helpful it is very general, privileges collection practices and lacks the detail that contemporary art curating requires. Despite this lack of regulation, I do acknowledge that there are ethical issues pertinent to curating that are not recognised by institutional requirements. As discussed in the literature review addressing the curatorial turn, methodologies have been created that encourage professional integrity and to mitigate issues such as bias and discrimination. However, these methodologies are only concerned with the practice of curating and not the process of conducting research on curating.

Therefore, alongside the autoethnography approach I will also use the phenomenological analysis methodology from the social sciences to guide me through an ethical analysis of my research. A key part of the phenomenological analysis approach is to first acknowledge the researcher's perceived preconceived ideas about

Curatopia: Museums and the Future of Curatorship, ed. Conal McCarthy and P. Schorch (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

⁸⁹ Clifford, *On the Edges of Anthropology: Interviews*, 51.

⁹⁰ Martin Edmond, *Dark Night: Walking with McCahon* (Auckland, N.Z.: Auckland University Press, 2011).

⁹¹ Robert Macfarlane, *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* (London: Penguin Books, 2013).

⁹² *Code of Ethics & Professional Practice: For Governing Bodies, Managers and Staff of Museums and Art Galleries in Aotearoa New Zealand*. (Museums Aotearoa Te Tari o Ngā Whare Taonga o te Motu, 2013), http://www.museumsaotearoa.org.nz/sites/default/files/ma_code_of_ethics_br_2014_v5_web_0.pdf.

the outcome of the research and then consciously critiquing that conclusion. This is referred to as 'bracketing'. Once the researcher has bracketed their preconceptions they are then more attentive to any new meanings that might emerge.⁹³ Furthermore, the phenomenological analysis methodology does not endeavour to make theoretical conclusions but rather indicates towards a latent premise.⁹⁴ This will enable me to scrutinise any ethical issues such as bias and also allow the possibility of new and unexpected meanings to surface, as it is not restricted by an undeclared hypothesis.

My analysis will also incorporate aspects of cross-case synthesis analysis. Social scientist Robert K. Yin describes this method as the process of aggregating the findings of each case study and "observing the pattern of results across the cases."⁹⁵ Identified patterns are then tested against rival theories to ascertain their validity and strength.⁹⁶

Case Studies and Thesis Structure

In considering my own curating as primary research, I have chosen to focus on six case studies that address the three dominant exhibition forms that were present in my practice and commonly found throughout the sector. By choosing to study group, solo and process-based exhibitions has enabled me to also compare exhibition forms that are considered to be part of either curating or the curatorial. If there really is such a division of methodology as stated by Lind then there should be correlating patterns of this separation present within these different exhibition forms. In addition, studying the process of making these exhibitions gave me an opportunity to analyse what part motivation has to play in relation to a curator's methodology. However, since my case studies are limited to my own practice I acknowledge that my findings cannot be indicative of the entire profession of curating. With that said, it may be possible to use my case studies to identify patterns that might also be present throughout the sector.

Therefore, my thesis is divided into three main chapters each dedicated to different forms of exhibition. Chapter One investigates the group exhibition, Chapter Two the solo exhibition, Chapter Three the process-led exhibition. Since every exhibition regardless of its form, is born of a specific context that holds many variables I have decided that each chapter will consider two case studies each. This will assist me in

⁹³ Nieswiadomy, *Foundations of Nursing Research*.; Yardley, *Material Discourses of Health and Illness*.

⁹⁴ *ibid*

⁹⁵ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 5 edition (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2013), 238.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*.

Chapter Four when I seek out the underlying premise apparent in each chapter through a cross case comparative analysis of each specific exhibition and between each exhibition form. This is followed by the conclusion where I consolidate the outcomes from the literature review in comparison to those discussed in Chapter Four.

Chapter One: The Group Exhibition

Whereas the monographic exhibition presents a single artist as its central subject, we have seen that the group exhibition presents the curator as the most visible producer of meaning for the work(s).¹

— Paul O'Neill

As mentioned in the introduction, the profession of curating has been divided into two methodological distinctions: conventional curating and the more progressive curatorial. These two methodologies can be identified through correlating conventional or alternative exhibition forms. My research, therefore, investigates exhibition forms that pertain to either curating or curatorial methodologies in order to examine *how* and *why* curators practise.

The group exhibition is a pertinent exhibition form in which to begin this investigation because it is the primary medium through which curators exercise the full extent of their agency. Group exhibitions give curators ultimate creative freedom to explore a concept through which all artworks and artists are arranged. The group exhibition is also associated with the romantic notion of the solo curatorial mastermind who reveals grand concepts underpinning art and society.²

For most museums and galleries, the group exhibition favours the predominance of existing works because commissioned works are costly and involve much more negotiation with individual artists. Artists benefit from such group shows but in different ways. For instance, their work might be exhibited in “mutual dialogue” amongst a gathering of artists that can help galvanize their position in the canon of art history.³ Or, their work might be associated with a particular topic that flows on to be included in other similar exhibitions around the world, thus adding to an artist's value within the global art market.⁴

¹ O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, 91.

² Smith and Fowle, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*, 30–36; L Alloway, “The Great Curatorial Dim-Out,” in *Thinking About Exhibitions*. (London; New York: Routledge, 1995).

³ O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, 30.

⁴ Ibid.; Smith and Fowle, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*, 72.

This chapter investigates two case studies of group exhibitions I curated in 2012: *What do you mean, we?* and *Between Memory and Trace*. In many ways, these exhibitions typify the conventions of the group exhibition format. However, since they involve commissioned works, and address charged socio-political topics, they also challenge this orthodoxy. Through this apparent mismatch of methodologies, between curating and the curatorial, these two exhibitions are pertinent to the topics explored in this thesis, as they both reflect ideological anomalies through which the process of methodology and the influence of motivation appear to intersect.

Curating *What do you mean, we?*

Outing local racism, harbouring a homeless artist, and performing self-psychoanalysis were not the outcomes that I anticipated from a group exhibition when I originally conceived of the 2012 exhibition *What do you mean, we?* (*WDYMW?*). The purpose of the show was to simply gather together an international selection of artists who had investigated the psychology of prejudice by employing a range of innovative strategies. However, I did have two other motivations for curating this exhibition: to engage with the immediate socio-political context of TT and to support Auckland-based artists who were engaging with the complex root cause of inequality.

I was relatively new to Auckland Tāmaki Makaurau when I started researching for the show and it was possibly for this reason that the context of TT was of great interest to me. Also, at this time Auckland had undergone great shift in governance through the fast-tracked merger of eight regional councils into one ‘Super City’ government – a modification that challenged perceived social borders as much as it tangibly transformed the legal and political ones.

TT was very much caught up in this rapid change. Indeed, the history of TT is one that is wedded to the evolution of Auckland by altering its organisational structure to accommodate the city's growth. TT is a unique organisation in New Zealand because it has a dual function as firstly a contemporary art space and secondly a community centre. Originally named the Pakuranga Arts Society, TT was built in 1975 to meet the needs of the then brand new suburb of Pakuranga.

In its infancy, Pakuranga was known for being the new and up and coming suburb for the white middle class. However, since then Pakuranga has grown to become a much

more ethnically diverse area. According to the 2013 census, Pakuranga Central's demographic is made up of: 48.2% European, 40.3% Asian, 9.1% Māori, 9.7% Pacific Islander, 1.9% Middle Eastern, Latin American, African, and 1.5% other – that ever elusive statistical category.⁵

Reflecting this diversity, TT has over time become a crucial hub for many local communities and groups but also further afield to include neighbouring areas such as Botany, Howick, Panmure, Otahuhu, Remuera and Auckland Central. TT hosts a range of activities from Indian weddings to Muslim prayer groups and from senior citizen bingo to orchestras. Needless to say, TT is a busy and active hub where various groups and communities converge. However, the white middleclass still has a strong cultural and political presence in this area, the negative side of which has a point of making itself known.



Left: TT Carnival, March 2011. Photo by Sam Hartnett.

Right: A photo of the 'Asian Invasion' flyer distributed in Pakuranga in 2011.

In 2011, Pakuranga was one of three areas in New Zealand chosen by the Right Wing Resistance to distribute their 'Asian Invasion' pamphlets. The Right Wing Resistance is the more confrontational arm of the National Front who are active in areas such as Christchurch and the southeastern suburbs of Auckland. Unsurprisingly this group are staunchly nationalistic, confusingly neo-Nazi and disgustingly phobic of any difference.

⁵ Statistics New Zealand, "QuickStats about a Place: Pakuranga Central," accessed June 8, 2015, http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-about-a-place.aspx?request_value=13491&tabname=Culturaldiversity.

In addition, in the nearby suburb of Howick the local iwi Ngāi Tai have been the victim of repeated political and public opposition. The tensions here without a doubt go back to colonial grievances of the nineteenth century but re-sparked back in 2004 when the whare *Te Whare Tupuna o Tōrere* was burnt down. *Te Whare Tupuna o Tōrere* was built in 1936 upon invitation of a local woman Emilia Maud Nixon for her Garden of Memories – a peace garden gifted to Howick with the intention of recognising Ngāi Tai as tangata whenua, and also to memorialise suffragettes.⁶ Following the arson, from 2004 to 2012 Ngāi Tai had further struggles in facing dubious local politics that hindered the reconstruction process.

In 2010, TVNZ's *Marae* current affairs programme recorded a heated incident that occurred when Michael Williams and David Collings (respectively, former and current chairman of the Howick local board) deliberately disrupted a turning of the soil ceremony for the new whare by parking Collings' campaign van in front of the garden's entrance.⁷ After much opposition throughout the consent process, the new whare is now built but unfortunately there is still much heated opposition to its use. For instance, it is not to be used as a marae because Pākehā locals didn't want congregations of people lingering about the area.⁸

If this wasn't enough, Pākehā Howick residents later caused further hostility by petitioning against Ngāi Tai to oppose the official naming of the new Super City ward after the prominent Chief Te Irirangi. As a result, the decision was all too readily overturned by Rodney Hyde, the former Minister of Local Government, in favour of the English name Howick. It is a remarkable fact that this whole area is gathered under the name of Howick – given that the ward precinct encompasses an area significantly larger in size than the suburb of Howick including Pakuranga, Botany and Flatbush all of which have a more ethnically diverse population.

It is this naive resistance to anything perceived to be Māori or any other non-white ethnicity that is emblematic of the Pākehā psyche throughout the country. Leading stories in national media of 2011 highlighted the predominance of these attitudes.

⁶ After the whare was damaged its name was removed. The new whare was initially named *Te Whare Wananga o Wairoa* and later changed to *Te Whare o Matariki*. See: 23 July 2007, "Council Accepts Withdrawal of Name for Whare," *Scoop News*, accessed July 10, 2016, <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/AK0707/S00253.htm>; Simon Smith and Scott Morgan, "Education in New Whare," *Eastern Courier*, March 26, 2014, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/auckland/local-news/eastern-courier/9864538/Education-in-new-whare>.

⁷ "Wharenuī Built in Howick Is Burnt down Marae Investigates," *Marae* (TV ONE, n.d.), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5XufbofBkU>.

⁸ Ibid.

Such as: TV presenter Paul Henry's comment that the Governor General Sir Anand Satyanand doesn't look or sound like a New Zealander; Prime Minister John Key's 'Tūhoe cannibalism joke';⁹ Act Party member John Banks' vilification of Polynesian young men being pot smokers who burgle the 'good folk' of Epsom;¹⁰ there was also an incident where Māori performers were physically assaulted by drunk fans during the opening ceremony of the 7th Rugby World Cup;¹¹ and of course the 2011 election which played on the interests of Pākehā from the likes of Act Party leader Don Brash who answered 'no' when asked if he believed that Māori have a special place in New Zealand.¹²

Cognitive psychologists have found that prejudice stems from an innate human need to categorise the world and mentally define difference. So while prejudice can be consciously addressed, it is not something that can be easily changed by modifying one's behaviour or attitude. Most prejudice is deeply hidden in our subconscious and surreptitiously leaks through slippages in language and behaviour, insidiously affecting our relationships with others. It is for this reason that no one is exempt from creating prejudice but also this realisation has shown that prejudice cannot be eliminated by just telling people to stop being discriminatory in fact this type of approach has been found to escalate the issue.

Also, given the ramifications of the global financial crisis, it is more important than ever that a greater understanding and new strategies are formed to mediate the negative effects of prejudice, because it is often in tough financial times when resources and jobs are hard to come by that issues like xenophobia and sexism escalate. Strategically, I wanted to curate an exhibition that would surreptitiously engage with local politics in a way that wouldn't didactically tell people what to think but rather lead people to acknowledge their own latent biases.

⁹ James Meikle, "New Zealand's Prime Minister Apologises for Cannibalism Joke," *The Guardian*, accessed June 8, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/may/13/john-key-apologises-cannibalism-joke>.

¹⁰ "John Banks Labeled a Redneck," *TV3 News* (TV3, November 15, 2011), <http://www.3news.co.nz/John-Banks-labelled-a-redneck/tabid/419/articleID/232830/Default>.

¹¹ Sharon Lundy, "Waka Cup Paddler's Ribs Broken in 'cowardly' Attack," *New Zealand Herald*, September 13, 2011, http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10751504.

¹² "Most Kiwis Don't Think Maori Hold a Special Place," *TVNZ*, accessed June 8, 2015, <http://tvnz.co.nz/national-news/most-kiwis-don-t-think-maori-hold-special-place-4158363>.



Tom Johnson, *What a black man feels like*, 2004 (video still).

Digital video, 29 mins. Courtesy of the artist

Curatorially there was one exhibition in particular that influenced me. This was *Black is Black Ain't* a 2008 show curated by Hamza Walker at the Renaissance Society in Chicago. This exhibition considered the politics of African American identity but did so not by capitalising on the identity of the artists but rather considered the cultural construct of race. This consideration of race as a social/cultural construct, I believe, created an important shift away from an ethnological paradigm to one of psychology in curation – an investigation that opened the topic of race up to non-African American artists.

Tom Johnson was one of these artists whose work I also included in *WDYMW?* In his work, *What a black man feels like* (2004), the video camera becomes the confidant as the artist delves into his own psyche. As a form of self-psychoanalysis Johnson's repetitive monologue painfully teases out the latent meaning of a single phrase to probe for hidden racial fears. It is humorous to watch at first but after 30 minutes it becomes almost painful to witness – as it proves an agonising process for him to neurotically deconstruct his subconscious. By using Johnson's work as the starting point for the exhibition I researched other artists and investigated how a group exhibition of this nature might help to apologetically address the racial tension and

other forms of prejudice that were present in TT's socio-political context of that time.¹³

I also commissioned the three writers – Fear Brampton, Danny Butt and Melissa Laing – to contribute exhibition essays. A couple of months before the opening I invited them all to attend an evening to discuss the show and we also installed the exhibition a week in advance so that they had time to experience it and respond in writing. These texts, together with my own, were made available to visitors as they entered the gallery and available online for free download as an ebook.¹⁴ This was important, as I was aware that my curation of the exhibition would have been influenced by my own latent bias. For after all, as a heterosexual Pākehā male I know very little about being the victim of prejudice but everything about being the demographic of the perpetrator. Therefore, by opening up the contextualisation of the exhibition to others it offered the potential for the curation to be questioned and expanded. This self-reflexive framing is also important within the structure of this thesis and case studies. By unpacking my thoughts and experiences I intend to expose and scrutinise the juncture of methodology and motivation as it unfolded within the curatorial process.

WDYMW? exhibited a diverse group of artists including: Elizabeth Axtman, Newell Harry, Amanda Heng, Rangituhia Hollis, Thomas Johnson, Simone Aaberg Kærn, Ayanah Moor, Colin Nairn, Kalisolaite 'Uhila and the Boat-people.org. Throughout the exhibition performance in its various forms featured prominently as a means to disclose personal neurosis, attain lived understanding, or to intervene into public space to confront the social conscience. For the purposes of this thesis, I have decided to focus upon Kalisolaite 'Uhila's work *Mo'ui Tukuhausia* (2012) that provided the exhibition's only live performance. This performance became a seminal aspect of the exhibition and one that also benefited from the curatorial approach and organisational support. As such, it stands as an example of the ways in which differing methodologies of curating and the curatorial collide and even appear to collude.

This is the story of 'Uhila's project *Mo'ui Tukuhausia* as it originally occurred at TT in 2012. I was first introduced to Kalisolaite through my friend and colleague James

¹⁴ Bruce E. Phillips et al., *WDYMW?*, ed. Rebecca Lal (Auckland, N.Z.: Te Tuhi, 2012).

Pinker who had worked with him to realise *Pigs in the Yard* at the Mangere Art Centre in 2011, which was his first performance in a public art gallery. Later that year, I was researching for *WDYMW?* and ‘Uhila’s emerging practice at the time fitted well into this context – so I arranged to meet with him to explore the possibility of his inclusion.

During this meeting I learnt that he employed an experiential approach in his practice rather than the head-in-book style of research that is so much more common these days with Fine Arts graduates – “my library is my heart and my mind” he would later tell me.¹⁵ At this time he was engaging in opposing aspects of participatory research into homelessness by spending the odd day or night living on the street while conversely working as an inner city security guard often required to move homeless people off private property. These experiential tests would build upon his knowledge of urban survival but also of how public space is implicitly controlled via social conditioning and more overtly through forms of legal and political enforcement.



Left: during the day Kalisolaite routinely deposited his belongings at entrance to the exhibition that included a shopping trolley he found onsite and a cardboard box. Right: Kalisolaite on the first day of his work. Photos by Bruce E. Phillips.

This fact was reinforced for me when he mentioned that on one such occasion, conducting his participatory research, he was ushered out of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki due to his appearance. This story fundamentally challenged me because it revealed that those of us who are in charge of what should be the most tolerant public institutions are also complicit in maintaining the veneer of social acceptance. Despite this, my colleagues and I took on ‘Uhila’s challenge of allowing him to live ‘homeless’ around the grounds of TT – an action that could render TT politically vulnerable and liable for his safety.

¹⁵ Bruce E. Phillips and Kalisolaite ‘Uhila, “Discussing Mo’ui Tukuhausia,” in *What Do You Mean, We?*, ed. Rebecca Lal and Bruce E. Phillips (TT, 2012), 47, <http://www.tetuhi.org.nz/downloadfile.php?filename=files/downloads/What%20do%20you%20mean%20we.pdf>.

‘Uhila’s inclusion in the show *WDYMW?* was important as it was the only live performative work that would engage with the public and place of Pakuranga. Real-time engagement with Pakuranga was integral, for it was one of the driving motivations of the exhibition. The duration of the piece also proved to be an important development that was finalised only a month prior to the show opening. In a meeting, I remember trying to float the idea with ‘Uhila of periodically coming and going from TT over the period of the exhibition. In retrospect I realise now that I was trying to tiptoe around the very real implications that actual living onsite might cause. It was TT’s assistant curator at the time, Shannon Te Ao who argued the importance of ‘Uhila dedicating to a solid period of occupation: “if you are going to do this you do it fulltime or not at all” he said – or something to that effect. ‘Uhila agreed to this and we bit the bullet.

For ‘Uhila, the work began at 6 am on the 19 March, the moment when he closed the door of his house leaving his wife and daughter behind. He had only what he needed – a small bundle of belongings and just enough spare change to catch the bus to Pakuranga. ‘Uhila told me that *time stopped* the moment that he walked out that door.¹⁶ For TT staff the passing of time was also altered, as we were kept busy facilitating a food bank, answering a barrage of questions, deflecting abusive confrontations with the public, and in my case sleeping with my cell phone close by in case of emergency.

On a daily basis ‘Uhila’s presence ignited responses that could have been produced by a 1950s social science experiment where the very best and worst of our local constituents were eked out. Public responses varied greatly and within a day had become instantly polarised. He was referred to as “that Thing!” by one visitor, was spat on by another, and even accused of not smelling enough of “urine and faeces”.

‘Uhila was periodically visited by friends, family and supporters but was on the most part left alone to exist day and night in the open like many other people do in urban centres around the globe. The necessity of learning urban survival is amongst the most insightful of his accounts to me. He told me:

¹⁶ Ibid.

A key aspect to survival is to be aware of your surroundings . . . I was doing a lot of sitting, a lot of observing, just listening and being aware of what was happening around the area. That was when I realised that I didn't really need to know the time, because . . . I would notice life happening like clockwork . . . but it is more like a shadow of time. People had the time but I was moving in their shadow.¹⁷

This required him to develop an intimate knowledge of the area. He sought shelter from the wind and rain, located safe nooks in which to hide, and found warmth in patches of sunlight between buildings to air out his clothes. On his first day it happened to be raining and 'Uhila told me that he saw the rain as a blessing as it forced him to think about finding shelter. He found part of an old broken tent, that we had for some reason kicking around the office, and by accumulating cardboard he established himself a sheltered spot beside the building in which to sleep.

Through this deeply attuned observation he gained a perspective on the workings of society passing around him. So well was his knowledge of the area that I found it hard to keep track of his movements. He did well to linger out in the open but camouflaged in the shadows. This survival strategy was intended to protect himself against adverse attention from other people. I find this aspect revealing of how vulnerable the human body is to the potential physical and psychological abuse of other humans. I think about this and consider how poignant the title for the work is – *Mo'ui Tukuhausia* – a Tongan phrase that can be translated to mean 'life set aside'.¹⁸

In my many conversations with 'Uhila, during the course of the work, these reflections on urban survival gave me a new understanding on space and time. I learnt that the perception of time is a form of political power that determines the movement or stasis of bodies. I also gained a new perspective of TT's role as a public space located within this nexus – a realisation that has influenced my subsequent curatorial ventures.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ For an alternative translation see: Nina Tonga, "Roaming All Levels," *Off the Wall Magazine and Media*, August 2014, <http://www.arts.tepapa.govt.nz/off-the-wall/7959/roaming-all-levels>.



Left: the few items in Kalisolaite 'Uhila's food bank on the first day of his work

Right: one of many slogans that Kalisolaite 'Uhila wrote on TT's building

Photos by Bruce E. Phillips.

While 'Uhila's survival was dependent upon his own deeply attuned knowledge of the area, he was in fact also dependent upon the local community for one crucial thing – to support his existence through a food bank located at TT's reception. This food bank was his primary food source and a very smart strategy to give the community the responsibility to keep him alive. TT advertised 'Uhila's work and the need for donated food but it took a couple of days for the idea of giving to take effect.

Ultimately, it was 'Uhila's presence that was a trigger for people to give. Often people would strike up conversation with staff and would learn about the project and would then be compelled to give. By the start of the second week TT received more food than 'Uhila could eat so our Director James McCarthy started making daily donation trips to the Auckland City Mission downtown.

Therefore, while 'Uhila received heated opposition to his presence he also received overwhelming kindness and generosity. Even weeks after the performance had ended I found gifts of food left outside his sleeping spot. It is important to note that Pakuranga being a suburban area typically does not have many visibly homeless people. Due to this and also to recent issues of racism in the area, 'Uhila became sensitive to the fact that people would associate his Tongan ethnicity with being destitute. To avoid this racial profiling, he decided to cover his face hands and all exposed skin in black clothing so that he would simply be an unidentifiable figure.

From the outset 'Uhila and I decided that the work was to be an experiment – an opportunity for him to try something radically new, to test his limits, to test TT and to

contribute a true challenge for the exhibition. As part of this experimental ethos ‘Uhila’s presence around the building changed overtime.

He decided to be mostly silent during his time at TT but he also wanted to establish some sort of communicative engagement with the public. He started by leaving behind cardboard signs asking for spare change as he had observed others do during his research. This form of communication evolved rapidly in scale and message to the extent that ‘Uhila was beginning to take over the building with messages written in chalk and signs put up around the neighbourhood. This required a flexible curatorial response that rolled with the constant changes and to educate staff why it was important for ramshackle looking traces to remain and not be removed.



Left: One of Kalisolaite ‘Uhila’s cardboard signs. Right: Kalisolaite ‘Uhila’s impromptu sign making workshop. Photos by Bruce E. Phillips.

‘Uhila was motivated to gain a lived understanding of homelessness. However, it was the provocation of his performance that triggered the enforcement of social order. As the title of the work implies, the action placed him outside of what is socially acceptable and due to this he was deemed someone to be corrected or deterred from being as he was. This reality was evident through the many police visits he received, which were the reason his performance ended a day earlier than its planned conclusion.’¹⁹

Two years on and ‘Uhila’s original iteration of the work still strikes me as being profound for its ability to fracture the veneer of social niceties through such a passive action. It also strikes me as being a significant contribution to the curatorial parameters of the exhibition. ‘Uhila’s work became an intervention breathed life, challenge and unpredictability into an otherwise standard group exhibition – an

¹⁹ Phillips and 'Uhila, "Discussing Mo'ui Tukuhausia."

intervention that made the exhibition less that of conventional curating and more alike that of the curatorial turn. This apparent methodological mingling is explored further in the next case study regarding the exhibition *Between memory and trace*.



Kalisolaite 'Uhila's bed outside TT. Photos by Bruce E. Phillips.

Curating *Between memory and trace*

Hot black coffee jolts my sleep-addled brain with a dose of sober clarity as I listen to the morning radio news report. The news presenter states that yesterday, Monday the 26 January 2008, Māori teenager Pihema Cameron was tragically stabbed to death by homeowner Bruce Emery (a middle-aged Pakeha church-going family man) for the alleged graffiti of three garage doors. I am on vacation visiting family and this news prompts the breakfast conversation. "I hear he was tormented every night by that tagger . . . he was just defending himself and his property" my relative comments. As a guest I don't want to cause an argument so I silently stare at my coffee and let my agitated thoughts whirl.

Emery was later sentenced to four years and three months imprisonment for manslaughter, not murder. The starting point for sentencing of a homicide with a knife is usually five and a half to six years. As it turns out he was released after serving only 11 months of this sentence. The story sparked a nationwide debate with the predominant attitude amongst Pākehā and the news media sympathising with Emery.

At 8 am on the 31 October 2012, artist Luke Willis Thompson with the help of myself and TT staff arranged for Emery's 'tagged' garage doors to be removed and negotiated with the new homeowner to fast-track building renovations – a

controversial operation that preserved the last trace of Cameron's life and also erased a site of urban trauma.

This action formed a key commission for the 2012 exhibition *Between Memory and Trace (BM&T)*. The motivation for this exhibition was arguably different to a regular group show – the difference being that the exhibition was primarily devised to support the creation of a new work by Thompson rather than the dictation of my curatorial premise. Te Tuhi's Assistant Curator Shannon Te AO, a friend of Thompson's, introduced me to Thompson's proposed project. As he shared the idea that earlier breakfast conversation came alive in my mind again and I instantly understood the importance and potency that this work could have in defiance of blatant institutional racism. Yet the commission would be risky because it had possibility to fail, it was also politically fraught and could upset Te Tuhi's key stakeholders and it would be a logistically difficult work to realise. Furthermore, Thompson was an emerging artist at this time and this was to arguably be his most elaborate work to date.

Due to these risks, I set to curating a tightly selected group exhibition that would relieve the pressure on Thompson and Te Tuhi if things did not go to plan. The group exhibition format also provided a strong conceptual background to Thompson's work by establishing a conversation with or comparison to the work of other like-minded practitioners such as artists Ruth Ewan and Maddie Leach.

A mix of motivations drove my curation of *BM&T*. I was motivated by a personal desire to in some small way to draw attention to a clear injustice caused by Pākehā privilege and normalised racism. I was motivated by the pride of supporting an emerging artist and for TT to take some risks in order to produce an important and powerful artwork. I was motivated by my own illusions of grandeur that I could define a form of conceptual practice that is sometimes misunderstood. And overall, I was motivated to use the safety of conventional curating to allow a risk-laden artwork to be created.

In this section I aim to unpack these motivations by walking through my contextualisation of the exhibition and an analysis of the selected works. For it is through my contextual and analytical rationale that my motivations are revealed. The exhibition's theme was grounded on my assertion that memorialisation has

unavoidably become a civic political act. By this I am not only referring to the ubiquitous inert obelisk, statue or bronze plaque. The act of memorialisation and its political motivation are also evident in more intangible forms including the public speech, parade, or the broadcast news report. Even though many such motivations might be unavoidably subconscious, fuelled by assumptions deeply engrained in the collective social psyche, it remains the fact that public remembrance is an exercise in political influence – an influence that has the power to shape the formative tenets of identity, history and a sense of place.²⁰

Art often has a central role in memorialisation. For, acting under the commission of the state, an artist may be responsible for creating the image, monument, song or story. Art in this guise, more often than not, subsumes a redundancy of agency and critical integrity in favour of the politic at play. The obvious reaction against such compromise, usually involves forms of revolutionary iconoclasm or ideological activism.

However, according to theorist Jacques Rancière, the problem of art being subsumed by politics is not simply solved by an act of oppositional subversion but rather maintaining an unresolved position in between. Rancière explains:

Art has lived for two centuries from the very tension by which it is at once itself and beyond itself, and by which it promises a future destined to remain unaccomplished. The problem is therefore not to set each back in its own place, but to maintain the very tension by which a politics of art and a poetics of politics tend towards each other, but cannot meet up without suppressing themselves . . . To prevent the resistance of art from fading into its contrary, it must be upheld as the unresolved tension between two resistances.²¹

BM&T was a very specific type of group exhibition that brought together three artists' projects that, I believe, attempt to maintain such an unresolved tension in relation to the memorial. Jointly, the three artists Ruth Ewan, Maddie Leach and Luke Willis Thompson strategically form various positions under the umbrella of conceptual practice by employing various means of intervention, exchange and the readymade. Through these approaches, the artists explored aspects of erasure or precariousness in

²⁰ Kevin Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1992).

²¹ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, 2nd ed. (London/ New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 183.

relation to overlooked or forgotten social histories. In fact, it is not only an unresolved tension between just two resistances but numerous pairs of resistances that play a pivotal role under the rubric of memorialisation. I have identified three pairs of such unresolved tension apparent throughout all three projects. These include the tension between: memory and erasure; engagement and estrangement; and the banal and profound.

Throughout this recollection of the exhibition, I explore each pair of resistances in relation to a single artwork rather than all three. I aim to explore these resistances as a sequence of interconnected in-betweens that might aid in discerning levels of contextual depth within both the artworks and in the curation of the exhibition. I wish to show how curation can be closely wedded to the artworks in the specific context of this reductive exhibition and how through this close association a curator's personal intrinsic and extrinsic motivations inevitably become a driving force enabling me to sustain focus.

Between memory and erasure



Documentation of the garage doors in Manurewa. Photo by Caroline Boreham. Courtesy of Luke Willis Thompson.

Memory is a selective phenomenon that occurs both consciously and unconsciously in our daily lives. Our brains are an incredible processor of information but they are also evolutionarily programmed as bias editors. This bias editing engages in a process

where some information is prioritised and saved while other information is deleted and forgotten. The end product of this process is memory. When this editing process is amplified from the individual to the collective, it is people and communities that are erased or forgotten.

However, with memorialisation, there is more at play than just selective memory. Memorialisation also often involves the claiming of space through the founding of a site. In discussing the topic of foundation sites, art historian W. T. J. Mitchell states that:

Historical events must, as we say, ‘take place’ somewhere and these places are almost immediately sacralised or monumentalised as foundation sites. The ‘taking place’, as native Americans sometimes say, requires a totemic keeping place to preserve memory and continuity.²²

Such foundational sites or totemic keeping places have also been described as time markers, designated areas in physical space that are preserved to create a perceived pause in the ‘motion and flow of time’.²³ Subjective engagement with these time markers is important in enabling individuals and communities to maintain a sense of place, one that informs the basis of identity and the understanding of being in the face of mortality.²⁴ Therefore, it is within this pursuit of stasis amongst the complexity of life that the politics of space and time is fought. The added complication here is that in the process of creating markers in time and space we also have to delete something. As Mitchell explains, the process of establishing foundation sites erases the actual “memory of the road to foundation”.²⁵

To unpack the psychology at play within this inherent contradiction, he uses the example of the Gestalt diagram ‘one vase, two faces’ to point out the impossibility of focusing on both the figure and the ground simultaneously.²⁶ Within this optical metaphor, it is the vase that stands as the time marker or memorial object in place of the face as the secondary negative space where the loss has occurred.

²² W.T.J. Mitchell, “Foundational Sites and Occupied Spaces” (The keynote lectures, dOCUMENTA (13), Staendehaus, Kassel, June 10, 2012), <http://d13.documenta.de/de/#/research/research/view/foundational-sites-and-occupied-spaces>.

²³ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 1977), 179.

²⁴ Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World*, 152.

²⁵ Mitchell, “Foundational Sites and Occupied Spaces.”

²⁶ Ibid.



Illustration of one vase two faces. Design Kalee Jackson.



Luke Willis Thompson, *Untitled*, 2012. (detail of cleaning abrasions left by Bruce Emery). Courtesy of the artist and Hopkinson Mossman, Auckland. Commissioned by TT, Auckland. Photo by Sam Hartnett.

In this light, Luke Willis Thompson's exchange with a property owner to obtain the garage doors used in his artwork simultaneously preserves and erases. His act of exchange oscillates between the figure and the ground as it does between the site and the saved trace. The action removes a local time marker of the tragedy and the history of the event as told through the news media. This act of erasure is also intended as an act of subversion on part of the artist to save, from inevitable destruction, the last remaining trace of a life.

Conversely, due to the fact that after stabbing Pihema Cameron for tagging his garage doors, Bruce Emery proceeded to clean off the tag, and his marks are also evident on

the garage doors through the abrasions left in the outline of the spray paint. Thus, Thompson's act of collecting the doors preserves the trace of the victim but also the hand that killed. The mark of the killer is inextricably bound in the mark of the life lost; the time marker of the trauma is simultaneously erased and conserved as it is removed from the site; the complication between what is being saved and lost is bound in the impossibility of separating the figure and the ground.

This psychological conundrum is further added to by the many news headlines and reports that have surrounded the incident. During his research, Thompson unearthed a considerable number of newspaper articles that, through the repetitive use of particular language, have played their part in influencing public opinion or disseminating disinformation. As a form of public remembrance, these reports simplified remnants of information so that they might catch the eye of the reader, or more accurately, appeal to the latent bias of a certain demographic.



Luke Willis Thompson, *Untitled*, 2012. Three garage doors relating to the death of Pihema Cameron, 26 January 2008. Courtesy of the artist and Hopkinson Mossman, Auckland. Commissioned by TT, Auckland. Photo by Sam Hartnett.

The graffiti-marked garage doors became the salient point for many news reports, through which Cameron was identified as the 'tagger' rather than the tragic victim of a violent act. As it turns out, the validity of the 'tagging' was later not deemed

relevant to the judge in the sentencing of Emery.²⁷ This revelation raises a number of pertinent questions: Why does a crucial point of interest to the media become irrelevant in a court of law? Whose interests are being served through the limited labelling of this individual? And, as a form of memorial, what effect does this type of reporting have on public remembrance?

In critiquing the lack of critical investigative journalism and fear-driven media rhetoric following 9/11, theorist Judith Butler explains that such examples of limited identity profiling in reporting hinders empathy and mourning:

Those who remain faceless or whose faces are presented to us as so many symbols of evil, authorize us to become senseless before those lives we have eradicated and whose grievability is indefinitely postponed.²⁸

She continues to explain that this facelessness also acts to limit critical discourse:

The foreclosure of critique empties the public domain of debate and democratic contestation, itself, so that debate becomes the exchange of views among the like-minded, and criticism, which ought to be central to any democracy, becomes a furtive and suspect activity.²⁹

While the media may limit critical discourse there are still other public platforms that encourage independent perspectives to be voiced rather than cloistering discussion. In 2013, the garage doors were purchased for the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki's permanent collection. In doing so, the artwork completes the ultimate shift through forms of remembrance: from the street and eye of the media to the context of the contemporary art gallery and finally a museum collection – where slow thinking and contemplation are prioritised over the attention-grabbing headlines that prevail in the public domain.

This sensitivity of Thompson's approach and content of the artwork required an equally sensitive curatorial approach that went beyond standard curating. I was present with Thompson at many of the critical stages of this project and took a lead in the negotiations with the homeowner and assisted in research where it was appropriate. This took time for negotiation to occur, lateral thinking, risk assessments, media

²⁷ Hugh Williams J, "Sentencing Remarks of Hugh William's J.: Regina v Bruce William Emery," Pub. L. No. CRI 2008 092 001285 (2009), 2.

²⁸ Judith Butler, *Prekarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London/New York: Verso, 2004). xvii.

²⁹ Ibid. xx.

strategies and lengthy conversations with the artist all to make sure the artist's prerogative was not compromised at any stage.

Yet this artwork has a complicated relationship to my curatorial motivations because while originally I was driven by an intrinsic intention to address societal ills it is hard to deny the fact that my career has benefited from the artwork's positive reception. I have since been invited to present on this work at conferences and I have received critical praise in exhibition reviews and magazine articles.³⁰ Therefore, I benefit from the positive retelling of this artwork. When I write these words doors open for me. When Pihema Cameron wrote his tag he lost his life. No matter how noble I recollect my intentions there is no escaping the extrinsic benefits I gain from the misfortune of another person.



Maddie Leach, *Evening Echo*, Tuesday 27 December, 2011– . Active at sunset on the last night of Hanukkah Shalom Park Gas Works Road & Albert Road, Cork, Ireland. Nine electric lamps (1 x 4.6m; 8 x 3.6m) with 'Chatsworth' columns, 'Kensington' lanterns and metal halide bulbs; SELC candelon street light control system. Photo by Clare Keogh. Courtesy of the artist.

Between engagement and estrangement

At Sunset on a cold December evening in 2011, members of a Hebrew Congregation and others gathered together in Shalom Park in the City of Cork, Ireland, to witness a

³⁰ Anthony Byrt, "The Quiet Curator," *Metro Magazine*, May 2017; John Hurrell, "Between Memory and Trace Part 3," *EyeContact*, January 1, 2013, <http://eyecontactsite.com/2013/01/between-memory-and-trace-part-3>; John Hurrell, "Using Art to Combat Prejudice 2," *EyeContact*, April 4, 2012, <http://eyecontactsite.com/2012/04/using-art-to-combat-prejudice-2>.

wrought iron gas lamp illuminate for half an hour. The artist Maddie Leach was also present. For this was the first occurrence of her artwork *Evening Echo* (2011–).

Shalom Park was opened in 1989 and its name marks a connection to Cork's dwindling Jewish community who have lived in the surrounding area since the nineteenth century. The park's opening ceremony included the illumination of a gas lamp – a gesture acknowledging the gifting of the land by the Cork Gas Company. After falling into disrepair for some years, the park was again 'upgraded' in 2003 and included a new suite of six electrically powered lamps. In 2011, Leach installed three additional matching lamps, completing a sequence of nine to correlate with the number of candles on the Hanukkah candelabrum – with the ninth lamp standing one metre taller than all the rest. Leach's work proposes that for the next fifty years the ninth lamp will be lit for only thirty minutes once a year, at sunset, on the last night of Hanukkah.

Judith Butler's position that empathy is contingent upon the understanding of life's fragility³¹ is also of importance in the mode of strategic social engagement evident in Leach's work *Evening Echo*. The question of empathy for Leach may operate within the notion that life is a slow and quiet passing and that this is heightened for those whose cultural perspective is in a direct mismatch with the fundamental tenets of the majority. Leach's intervention essentially attempts to reactivate a memorial mostly forgotten. In doing so, she calls on the problematic question of empathetic remembrance for a dwindling community whose memory is fading amongst the city's current inhabitants. However, to mistake this motivation as an attempt at creating lasting social change would be a grave misreading. As a type of social engagement, Leach sets up the possibility for participation but does not assume or presuppose that the offer is taken up.

She made no Twitter announcements, no Facebook sharing of the annual event, rather the occasion was made known to the public through a series of advertisements in Cork's free newspaper the *Evening Echo*. Here, the artist made no attempt to fabricate a positive public situation in the beguiling neoliberal spirit of social inclusion.³² Alternatively, Leach establishes a conceptual framework that prioritises the possibility

³¹ Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*.

³² Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London/ New York: Verso, 2012).14, 277.

for physically present participation in such a way that allows for the artist's own proposition to be ignored or discarded by the community.

This approach allows social engagement to take place with various levels of criticality. To understand this strategy further, it is important to consider how it combines forms of communicative and symbolic acts. Influenced by theorist Jürgen Habermas, communicative action is a "type of social action geared to communication and understanding between individuals".³³

Leach enacts a form of communication that partakes in the shared understanding of a specific location and community. She does this by adding to the existing six lamps together with the constituent ephemera (advertisement, poster, promissory agreement and publication). These communicative contributions allow the potential for a set of relations to be established through a participant's own free will to engage.

The example here is pivotal because it reduces the possibility for the artist to act as a manipulative agent in presupposing from an assumptive position what is or isn't in the community's best interests. It further posits a dramaturgical situation where time, place and the community set the context for meaningful engagement. *Evening Echo* also functions strongly as a symbolic act. In the symbolic, there is no actual social exchange enacted only meaning attributed to the artwork beyond what its objective existence suggests at face value.³⁴

This is particularly evident when Leach and I were considering the contingent material that was to be exhibited at TT as part of *BM&T*. For example, the free takeaway poster was brought into association with the promissory agreement; this drew attention to the dichotomy between the Jewish and Western European calendars and the artist's logistical hurdles to work with this problematic issue to establish the automated lighting of the ninth lamp for the next 50 years. The 1989 video documentation of Shalom Park's inaugural dedication was also brought into relationship with the live video feed at TT that observed the second instance of the lamp being lit on the last night of Hanukkah.

³³ Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011). 7.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 78.



Maddie Leach, *Evening Echo*, 2011-. Announcement in the Evening Echo newspaper.
Designed by Warren Olds. Courtesy of the artist.

EVERING ECHO

SHALOM PARK
51°53' N / 8°27' W
CORK, IRELAND

✱

The problem is that the civil calendar used by most of the world has abandoned any correlation between the moon cycles and the month, arbitrarily setting the length of months to 28, 30 or 31 days. The Jewish calendar, however, coordinates three astronomical phenomena: the rotation of the Earth about its axis (a day); the revolution of the moon about the Earth (a month); and the revolution of the Earth about

2011	Tuesday 27 December	4.30 pm
2012	Saturday 15 December	4.24 pm
2013	Wednesday 4 December	4.26 pm
2014	Tuesday 23 December	4.27 pm
2015	Sunday 13 December	4.24 pm
2016	Saturday 31 December	4.34 pm
2017	Tuesday 19 December	4.25 pm
2018	Sunday 9 December	4.24 pm
2019	Sunday 29 December	4.31 pm
2020	Thursday 17 December	4.25 pm
2021	Sunday 5 December	4.26 pm
2022	Sunday 25 December	4.29 pm
2023	Thursday 14 December	4.24 pm
2024	(go to 2025)	
2025	Wednesday 1 January	4.34 pm
2025	Sunday 21 December	4.26 pm
2026	Friday 11 December	4.24 pm
2027	Friday 31 December	4.34 pm
2028	Tuesday 19 December	4.26 pm
2029	Saturday 8 December	4.25 pm
2030	Friday 27 December	4.30 pm
2031	Tuesday 16 December	4.25 pm
2032	Saturday 4 December	4.26 pm
2033	Friday 23 December	4.28 pm
2034	Wednesday 13 December	4.24 pm
2035	(go to 2036)	
2036	Tuesday 1 January	4.35 pm
2036	Saturday 20 December	4.26 pm

Maddie Leach, *Evening Echo*, 2011- (detail). Edition of offset printed posters designed by Warren Olds / Studio Ahoy. Courtesy of the artist.



(video still) Live video feed to witness the second instance of *Evening Echo*
Featuring fred Rosehill addressing the audience at TT
Sunday, 16 December 2012, 5–6 a.m., Auckland
Courtesy of the National Sculpture factory, Cork and TT

By considering the uncannily similar video footage; the 1989 documented and real-time presence of Fred Rosehill, the president of Cork's Hebrew Congregation; the lamp's fleeting illumination coupled with the sun setting in Cork as it rose in Auckland, these relationships subtly built upon the nuances of time and light as a fitting reflection on the passing of a generation. A myriad of other associations and attributed meanings could be further applied by taking into account the reproduction of the original ceremonial photograph, documentation of the first lamp lighting and a copy of the *Evening Echo* newspaper featuring the advertisement.

Here, strategic forms of communicative action and lingering forms of symbolic significance balance contemplation with participation and spectatorship. In doing so, there is a conscious decision within the curation of the exhibition and within the artwork to resist the presupposed emancipation of the viewer through social engagement – a proposition that risks not connecting with anyone but at the same time has the potential for deeply profound connections to be formed.

This resistance, between engagement and estrangement, stands at odds to forms of curating and participatory art that critic Claire Bishop argues are rather than “being oppositional to spectacle [and neoliberal or capitalist agendas that champion the spectacle, have] now entirely merged with it.”³⁵ Echoing Rancière, she continues to emphasise that:

This new proximity between spectacle and participation underlines the necessity of sustaining a tension between artistic and social critiques. The most striking projects that constitute the history of participatory art unseat all of the polarities on which this discourse is founded (individual/collective, author/spectator, active/passive, real life/art) but not with the goal of collapsing them. In doing so, they hold the artistic and social critiques in tension . . . for both art and the social are not to be reconciled, but sustained in continual tension.³⁶

³⁵ Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. 277.

³⁶ Ibid.



Left: Ruth Ewan, *Them that plants them is soon forgotten*, 2010-12 Crop of 200 Paul Robeson heritage tomato plants
Right: Photo of Ruth Ewan's Paul Robeson archive at TT. *The Persecution of Paul Robeson*, in *Headlines* (magazine), August 1976. Photos by Sam Hartnett courtesy of TT, Auckland.

Between the banal and the profound

I have so far explored two pairs of unresolved tension: between memory and erasure, and between engagement and estrangement. Throughout, I have emphasised how the curatorial approach accommodated the conceptual sensitivities employed by Thompson and Leach that has enabled their projects to maintain a resistance in between these polarities. In considering Ruth Ewan's work, I will now investigate the third and final unresolved tension: between the banal and the profound.

In the TT courtyard, a grove of over 200 heirloom Paul Robeson tomato plants grow in black pots. The grove's presence invites joy in some, curiosity in others and overall a common acceptance by most gallery visitors and locals who frequent TT. However, lingering behind the easy approval of these tomato plants is a troubled history. For the act of naming has politicised these tomatoes and so they carry the story of a man, the situation he found himself in and the cause he fought for.

No one knows who named this Siberian tomato variety after Robeson, only that the seeds were first exported internationally from Moscow in the early 1990s.³⁷ Although, given Robeson's fame and relationship with the Soviet Union during the 1940s, the connection is not wholly surprising.³⁸ Neither is the fact that the Paul Robeson fruit is a 'black beefsteak' tomato – no doubt a deliberate racial insinuation of the African male body.

Far from glorifying the memory of Robeson, these connotations further obfuscate his life and the significance of the plant in a confusing mix of Cold War politics and racial profiling. Ewan entitled the installation, *Them that plants them is soon forgotten* (2010-12), after the lyric from Robeson's most famous song 'Ol' Man River' from the Broadway production and film *Showboat*.³⁹ Her use of the Paul Robeson plant does not function to reconcile the problematic associations embedded in the tomato's naming. Rather, as the artwork's title suggests, her use of the tomato plant is to further emphasise the complications within an existing form of memorialisation, to invite a reinvestigation of Robeson's legacy and thereby a reflexive consideration of who and what is remembered or forgotten.

The allowance for participation in the work adds further layers of complexity to the artwork and the exhibition's form. As the fruit ripened, gallery visitors were welcome to pick and eat the tomatoes. Given the associations to Robeson's body through naming and the consumption of the tomato flesh, there is a similarity to the Catholic tradition of communion as a form of remembrance – an association that creates a tension between the joy of eating freshly picked heritage tomatoes and the elegiac remembrance of an artist who became a politically harassed figure.

Witnessing the behaviour of avian visitors to the tomato grove I mused at how the work also invited a Buddhist-like reflection on the unkind nature of life. Blackbirds made a habit of dropping in to feed off ripe fruit that had not yet been picked. The birds fluttered and fought over the remaining fruit only to wastefully peck out red patches on mostly green fruit. Yet, due to their beastly behaviour, the birds invite other life such as insects, both beneficial and harmful, to establish the beginnings of an ecosystem. This living component expanded the traditional white cube frame of the

³⁷ Ruth Ewan, *Brank & Heckle (exhibition Brochure)* (Dundee Contemporary Arts, 2011), www.dca.org.uk/uploads/Ruth-Ewan--Brank-Heckleinterpretation.pdf. 6.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ 'Ol' Man River', music by Jerome Kern, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, 1927.

exhibition by encouraging gallery visitors to venture outside. Since Ewan is based in Scotland, this work also required much conversation, curatorial research, technical expertise and gardening labour from TT staff to realise it to such a large-scale in lieu of the artist.



Paul Robeson heritage tomato plants. Photos by Sam Hartnett courtesy of TT, Auckland.

In this work, Ewan creates a bittersweet commemoration that sends conflicting messages on the memory and fragility of life. At first consideration, however, many people would have simply recognised the work as only a grove of tomato plants. Between this initial objective recognition versus the social significance, which unfolds more slowly, is a powerful tension that shifts our understanding from the casually ordinary to the deeply insightful and back again. The resistance between the objective and subjective creates a lag that somehow invites the discovery of greater symbolic meaning to be experienced as if an epiphany.

What this example also illustrates is the potential of inanimate material in conjunction with remembrance to awaken a response to past pain. For dOCUMENTA (13), curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev conceived the notion of the ‘traumatised object/artwork’, one that gives some further understanding of materiality and pain. Christov-Bakargiev proposes that bodies of culture, like bodies of people, also suffer from a type of post-traumatic stress disorder.⁴⁰ Trauma causes inanimate objects to undergo and relive transitions of symbolic and objective meaning – transitions that if

⁴⁰ Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, “On the Destruction of Art – or Conflict and Art, or Trauma and the Art of Healing,” in *The Book of Books: dOCUMENTA (13) Catalog 1/3* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012).

recognised can help us “react to a sense of the precariousness of life.”⁴¹ Throughout DOCUMENTA (13), there were many examples of artworks and historical artefacts that illustrated Christov-Bakargiev proposition.



Ruth Ewan, *Them that plants them is soon forgotten*, 2010–12 Crop of 200 Paul Robeson heritage tomato plants.

Photos by Sam Hartnett courtesy of TT, Auckland.

Sharing similarity to Ewan’s work was the planting and display of Korbinian Aigner’s apple varieties. Known as the *Apfelfarrer* (apple priest), Aigner was a Catholic priest whose anti-Nazi stance during the 1930s resulted in his imprisonment and ultimate deportation from Germany.⁴² His most enduring form of resistance was the cultivation of four new strains of apple, which he named after concentration camps during his four years spent in Dachau.⁴³ As with the Paul Robeson tomato, Aigner’s act of naming irrevocably associates a humble apple with both the horror of the Holocaust and the memory of resistance. Context is integral for the transition of the traumatised object’s symbolic meaning to shift from the banal to the profound in such artworks.

The road to uncovering this context has its rewards for those willing to sit with the object and to scratch the surface of its reason for existence. In the search for further meaning, anticipation builds and the experience of discovery or impact of understanding are made all the more compelling. Carefully chosen words from the

⁴¹ Ibid. 283.

⁴² Lars Bang Larsen, “Korbinian Aigner,” in *The Guidebook: Catalog 3/3 dOCUMENTA (13)* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012). 34.

⁴³ Ibid.

artist, curator or institution are required in this process for both allowing the objective and the subjective contexts to be considered with subtlety and time.

All the artworks by Ewan, Leach and Thompson included in *BM&T* rely, to some degree, on this lag between experiencing the objective existence of a work and the availability of explanatory reading material. It is expected within a group exhibition, that the curator will create such explanatory writing to reveal the artworks' 'secret' meanings.

However, Ewan, Leach and Thompson are greatly aware of the implications that didactic methods of curating and museology can have upon the material histories and memories of people. Their alternative approach, therefore, is to explore the potential of the ephemeral and everyday considered as symbolically profound, but ambiguous and open-ended, remnants of human existence. Taking heed of this sensibility I took great care to work closely with the artists to make sure all interpretive material did not speak for the artworks or the lives they are associated with.

This approach, together with the commissioning focus of Thompson's work, made *BM&T* less of a curator-centric exhibition. By this I do not mean to downplay the fact that the exhibition was influenced greatly by my personal agenda. Indeed, my intention to tackle a societal injustice, the pride associated with enabling a risky artwork to be realised and the institutional power I utilised to make claim to a certain form of artistic practice that has since proven to further my career are inescapable motivations that influenced the creation of the exhibition. Overall, with these motivations considered, it was also a form of exhibition making that aimed to serve the artists and the subtle nuances in which their artworks function. For this reason it is difficult to consider it as a standard group show. This sentiment is further explored in the Chapter Two where I discuss the solo exhibition, which is also considered within Maria Lind's definition of conventional curating.

Chapter Two: Solo Exhibitions

the solo exhibition . . . [a]s a typology . . . is given scant attention compared with group shows . . . the solo exhibition is seen as more directly representing the artist's voice, and so supposedly comes with curatorial self-effacement.¹

— João Ribas

The solo exhibition is assumed to be the most conservative and least curated form of exhibition due to its straightforward transactional process that posits the artist as the solo author, subject and decision maker.² Typically the artist produces a new body of work or the curator might make a selection of existing works. In both instances, the method is clear-cut and it fits very comfortably within traditional institutional procedures.

With solo exhibitions there is also significant cultural capital to be gained. Generally speaking, the lesser-known the artist and the better-known the institution the higher the stakes are for the artist. And conversely, the greater-known the artist and the lesser-known the institution the higher the stakes are for the institution. Reputation is a form of power that is desired for a number of reasons both worthy and vain.

In this chapter, I have chosen to focus upon two solo exhibitions that I curated in 2013: *Destroyed Word* by Santiago Sierra and *The long White Cloud* by William Pope.L. They have been chosen for their comparability in being authored by renowned artists with whom TT produced a new work. Considerable agency resides with these artists because they are important figures whose international reputation is far greater than TT's and my own.

These exhibitions are also pertinent to this thesis because they are created not just by the artists themselves but by a team of practitioners that grant access to rich cultural, historic and contemporary contexts. As curator Rob Bowman expounds: "A solo project is not formed independently and imposed upon the work, but rather emerges

¹ João Ribas, "Notes Towards a History of the Solo Exhibition," *Afterall*, no. 38 (Spring 2015), <http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.38/notes-towards-a-history-of-the-solo-exhibition>.

² Ibid.; Rob Bowman, "First Person Singular," *The Exhibitionist*, no. 1 (2010): 35—38; Jim Barr and Mary Barr, "The Curator's Egg," *Over The Net*, November 25, 2012, <http://overthenet.blogspot.com/2012/09/the-curators-egg.html>; Jim Barr and Mary Barr, "Good Work," *Over The Net*, February 20, 2013, <http://overthenet.blogspot.com/2013/02/good-work.html>.

from the work; its form is exactly that of the art it contains.”³ Therefore, these two shows are relevant case studies for my research enquiry because they present an interesting challenge to conventional practice by questioning the influence of curatorial methodology and motivation within the form of a solo exhibition.

Curating Santiago Sierra's *Destroyed Word*

The .45 Magnum is a truly handsome object. It commands a seductive and sublime beauty by virtue of being a meticulously engineered weight of stainless steel ergonomically fitted to the hand so when you cock the barrel and squeeze the trigger it feels as if you have magically summoned a bolt of lightning from your finger tip. This extension of the body emphasises a whole new awareness of an individual's potential influence on the surrounding environment. My opportunity to clasp and fire such a weapon came about through a small-scale test shoot for the letter **A** that features as one of ten large sculptural letters in Santiago Sierra's *Destroyed Word* (2013).

The experience of rattling off a few rounds and destroying targets was exhilarating – a surprising response for me as an ardent pacifist. Perhaps this is how real power corrupts. For what is *real* power but the ability to have easy won advantage over one's physical reality or over other life forms. Shooting the .45 was dominance through technological leverage. However, I wonder what such dominance would feel like through the mechanisms of a government or a multinational corporation where power is made manifest through law and capital to control vast populations or to profit off their labour.

Thankfully, as a peaceful and politically stable nation, there is no valid reason to fire a handgun in New Zealand other than recreation and it is relatively difficult to get hold of them. Police very rarely carry guns – usually only under immediate threat of an armed suspect. When it came time to film the destruction of the **A**, the guns being loaded were purchased for sport use only with some of them being specialised pieces made especially for competition shooting. The gunmen/women requested that their identities remain anonymous and that the location is not disclosed. Suffice to say that

³ Bowman, "First Person Singular," 36.

it involved a generous group of individuals who were keen to be part of an unusual art experience.

When TT was invited to be one of nine partnering art organisations to produce Sierra's work *Destroyed Word* there were many options available in terms of material and method of destruction. The instructions were to construct a 3.6 metre high letter, in Arial Narrow Bold typeface, out of a material of significance to the location in which it is made and to film its destruction.



Test shoot with .45 Magnum Revolver Pistol, May 2012.

Photo by James McCarthy

I believe TT was invited early within the development of the work. The TT team and I had seen images of an **M** made of concrete, a **T** made of foam and had heard of plans to make an **I** out of human faeces. Aotearoa New Zealand's history is inextricably bound to global trade. As a former colony of the British Empire, New Zealand's key role was to produce primary products contributing to the Empire's power and wealth. Since the 1970s New Zealand has had a greater international reach as an exporter of various materials, products and cultural experiences within global capitalism. Given this history there were a few options that came to mind such as: lamb, wool, seafood, radiata pine, coal, oil, gas, aluminium, kiwi fruit, Hobbits, the All Blacks, mass produced Māori trinkets and other tourist products. And what of the method of destruction: dissolve, collapse, steamroll? Also, we knew that each letter would be combined to exhibit a single word but we were not sure which word.

Sierra's assistant Reuben Moss had let slip that it might be the Spanish transliteration CAPITALISMO and knowing Sierra's back catalogue of transactions and interventions, that reveal global capitalism's predilection for exploitation, this word

was a likely choice. Yet at the time the word was not confirmed and only some months earlier Sierra and his team had burned the FUTURE in Spain, had toured a giant NO around the world, and a few years back had dug a monumental SUMISION into the earth of Mexico. Therefore, the *Destroyed Word* could have been any word within Sierra's lexicon.

After much research, milk became the material of choice. It is hard to escape the fact that milk production is the current economic lifeblood of New Zealand. However, the wealth produced by milk is one that is not without consequences. Milk certainly has a price and the people and land of New Zealand have paid for it and will continue to pay for it double that of other countries. In 2014, the price of milk in New Zealand cost between 2 to 2.65 NZD per litre but in the United Kingdom it cost as little as 44p (0.86 NZD).⁴

This monopolising by corporations at the expense of New Zealand's public is just one part of a larger story about how this small nation has grown such a disparity between the rich and poor.⁵ It seems that as the rich get richer the poor take to stealing milk. Just a month before we filmed the destruction of the A, Police caught thieves who had stolen more than 600 two-litre bottles of milk. The Police believed the thieves were stealing to order.⁶

According to scientists the dairy industry also has grave environmental costs. Most pressing is the pollution of natural waterways due to the rapid increase in dairy farming and the lack of protective measures to stop excess nitrogen, effluent and erosion leaching into streams and rivers.⁷ This has occurred to the extent that some of New Zealand's rivers are among the most polluted in the world and are beyond the safe levels for human contact.⁸ Earning the term 'dirty dairying' this cost to society and the environment is "approximately equal to the export revenue and gross

⁴ Keith Woodford, "Why Is New Zealand's Retail Milk so Expensive?," *Posts from Keith Woodford*, April 2, 2014, <https://keithwoodford.wordpress.com/2014/04/02/why-is-new-zealands-retail-milk-so-expensive/>.

⁵ "Richest 10% of Kiwis Control More Wealth than Remaining 90%," *Oxfam New Zealand*, June 16, 2014, <https://www.oxfam.org.nz/news/richest-10-kiwis-control-more-wealth-remaining-90>. George Arnett, "New Zealand and Mexico the OECD Economies Most Affected by Inequality," *The Guardian*, December 9, 2014, sec. News, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/dec/09/new-zealand-mexico-oecd-economies-most-affected-inequality>.

⁶ Paloma Migone and Abbie Napier, "Milk 'Stolen to Order,'" *Stuff.co.nz*, April 4, 2012, sec. Crime, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/crime/6689279/Milk-stolen-to-order>.

⁷ Dr. Jan Wright, "Water Quality in New Zealand: Land Use and Nutrient Pollution," Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (New Zealand Government, November 2013), <http://www.pce.parliament.nz/assets/Uploads/PCE-Water-quality-land-use-web-amended.pdf>; Rachel Young, "Dairy Farming Harming Water," *Stuff.co.nz*, November 21, 2013, sec. News, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/9425346/Dairy-farming-harming-water>.

⁸ Young, "Comments."

domestic product” in essence making the dairy industry a false economy if we consider the long-term betterment of the nation.⁹

Dairy farming can also be considered part of the colonial project of land confiscation and primary producer for the British Empire. Just over 200 years ago 80 per cent of New Zealand was covered in native forest. Only about 25 per cent of this native forest would survive though to the present day.¹⁰ Much of the forest was cleared in the nineteenth century after being sold by Māori to European settlers or by being illegitimately confiscated by the Crown. Prior to the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, timber was already the country's first primary industry. Sheep farming was then the next major export from the 1850s through into the 1980s. While dairy started at a similar time to sheep farming it was not initially a viable export but changed as refrigeration was invented and the industry grew.¹¹

By the turn of the century most of the factories were cooperatives owned and operated by the farmers themselves and by the 1920s there were 600 in operation. In the late twentieth century they merged and become increasingly centralised until there were only four main cooperatives operating in the 1990s – two of which would merge in 2001 to become the Fonterra Cooperative Group, now the “world’s largest global milk processor and dairy exporter”.¹² The dairy industry is currently New Zealand’s biggest export earner.¹³

This historic contextualisation was just a small amount of the research that the TT team and I contributed to the project in order to identify milk as an appropriate material. The curatorial role in this instance was to provide local discernment in order to allow a foreign artist meaningful access into a specific socio-political context.

⁹ “Study Highlights ‘true Cost’ of Dairying,” *Massey University*, April 28, 2015, <http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/about-massey/news/article.cfm?mnarticle=study-highlights-true-cost-of-dairying-28-04-2015>.

¹⁰ Robert M. Ewers et al., “Past and Future Trajectories of Forest Loss in New Zealand,” *Biological Conservation*, no. 133 (2006): 313.

¹¹ Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, [Large Print] edition (Auckland, N.Z.: Penguin Books NZ, 2012).

¹² “Fonterra - Our Business,” accessed June 7, 2015, <https://www.fonterra.com/nz/en/Financial/Fonterra+Place>.

¹³ “Dairy Industry,” *New Zealand Dairy Careers*, accessed July 6, 2015, http://www.nzdairecareers.co.nz/?page=Dairy_Industry&subpage=Dairy_Facts.



Production images of *Destroyed Word* (the letter 'A') an undisclosed location in New Zealand. Photos by Bruce E. Phillips.

Considered from these historical and contemporary perspectives, milk is an interesting target for such a project because of its colonial and environmental complicity but also due to its business practices that have led to financial success. The inclusion of milk in the context of the *Destroyed Word*, therefore, is a complicated symbol for capitalism.

This made the method of destruction a difficult decision because it could be to some extent be considered an unfair attack on the dairy industry. After further conversations with Sierra's assistant Reuben Moss (an ex-pat New Zealand artist), we understood the artist's intentions to not demonise business or the labour of the people that work in certain industries but to voice frustration with a global system that benefits the few over the many. Moss described the motivation for destroying primary products as being comparable to the historical gesture of using bread in protests as a symbol of class inequality as occurred in Britain (1795), Egypt (1977), Tunisia (1983-4) and in protests associated with the Arab Spring (2011).¹⁴

With this explained, we then sought to find a method of destruction that would be expressive of this frustration. Through friends of¹⁵ we had two leads: who had the access to and a license for detonating explosives, or who had access to firearms and willing participants. The first option to use explosives did not pan out so the firing squad it was to be. However, this turned out to be an even more relevant option.

..... mentioned that they often use plastic soft-drink bottles filled with coloured liquid for target practice because they can handle multiple impacts and once shot the

¹⁴ Rami Zurayk, "Use Your Loaf: Why Food Prices Were Crucial in the Arab Spring," *The Guardian*, July 17, 2011, sec. Life and style, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2011/jul/17/bread-food-arab-spring>.

¹⁵ These names have been censored to protect anonymity.

bottles have a visceral effect with the liquid pouring out as if blood spouting from a body. Also, after a few experiments of testing the underlying structure, plasterboard was included for a strong but fallible support and the added visual effect of emitting clouds of white dust when punctured by bullets. With these technical aspects resolved we assembled a film crew and technical team and then we were ready.

Take note: a 3.6 metre tall letter **A** requires at least 200 litres of milk, four sheets of GIB board, many tubes of glue that can stick damp surfaces, a film crew, four shooters, and 500 rounds of ammunition. Unsurprisingly, 200 litres is well under the threshold that is legally permitted to dump milk close to a natural water source.

We only had one take, one opportunity when everyone was available, and due to a small budget and the high cost of dairy, only one chance to purchase the milk. It didn't all go to plan. The accuracy of the shooters was flawless and they came close to levelling it with 9 mm bullets by completely cutting right through one leg of the **A** but due to the structure's integrity it remained standing albeit a little lopsided. To finish the job shotguns had to be brought out. Although, most people who viewed the artwork thought it was all deliberately choreographed to build suspense.¹⁶

Over the two years it took to produce the entire *Destroyed Word* project there were many other such accidental mishaps. These quirks make the work relatable to some degree. An element that is also enhanced by the comedic warmth of the people that feature in many of the other letter destructions. There are some beautiful moments that are priceless to me such as the young boy in Papua New Guinea who wanders into frame playing the hoop rolling game with an old tire and a pair of sticks oblivious to the men slugging away with axes at the merciless solid wooden **I**. Another is the anticlimactic thud of the other **I** being toppled and a man looking indifferent at the camera. And, who can't sympathise with the lack of skill and laid-back work ethic that the sledge hammer wielding youths seem to have in destroying the **A** in Paris?

These idiosyncrasies are part of each letter's story and also reflect Sierra's strategy of internationally dispersing his artistic labour. Not unlike a multinational company in our age of post-Fordism, Sierra outsources 9 of the 10 letters in *Destroyed Word*¹⁷ to

¹⁶ Mark Amery, *On Criticism, The Destroyed World, Asia Pacific Triennial*, CIRCUIT CAST, accessed July 6, 2016, <http://www.circuit.org.nz/blog/circuit-cast-episode-2-on-criticism-the-destroyed-world-asia-pacific-triennial>.

¹⁷ Santiago Sierra self funded the filming of the **I** in New Delhi, India.

be created by others with a relative degree of freedom gifted to each partnering organisation. However, while global capitalism relies on the fact of employing labour forces in countries where it is considerably cheaper, Sierra's outsourcing in contrast was a problematic and precarious venture for him in many ways. Sierra explains:

It was difficult to find all the partners as the institutions were producing a tenth of a work knowing they would need to share the final piece with nine other institutions. There's also the question of whether a tenth of a work is a work. Some institutions got it straight away and saw that the letters became their own works when they were well tailored to the context. Sometimes when those specifics were impractical and the idea had to change, the interest would wane and things slowed down. In the end it all came together.¹⁸

As Sierra explains, first there was the trouble of finding organisations that would be sympathetic to the concept and have the means to produce something on this scale. When it turns out that some institutions want to have exclusive rights to a newly commissioned work it automatically limits the pool of suitable partners. Perhaps this is why many of the partnering organisations are medium size project spaces, commercial galleries or art festivals. Such organisations by virtue of being small and nimble are opportunistically innovative or plural in function and can often be more willing to take on risks that large museums may not. The down side of this is that inevitably their resources are usually limited which raises questions around quality control and the possibility of failure. Yet at the same time this risk allowed a great amount of freedom that made it possible for each partner to assume ownership and therefore become more creatively invested.

In terms of cultural capital to be gained, there is little surprise that TT would desire to work with a seminal figure such as Santiago Sierra but there was also a significant risk embarking on this project given his (not necessarily accurate) reputation of being uncompromising. This perception was garnered in New Zealand through his 2009 performance work *Person Showing his Penis*¹⁹ staged in Wellington in response to a commission that turned sour for *One Day Sculpture* curated by Bristol-based Claire Doherty – a work that some considered an “unsanctioned guerrilla intervention” according to *Frieze* magazine.²⁰

¹⁸ Dan Chappell, “A Man of His Word,” *Art News New Zealand*, 2013.

¹⁹ Santiago Sierra, *Person Showing His Penis*, Live performance, 2009, http://www.santiago-sierra.com/200905_1024.php.

²⁰ Max Delany, “One Day Sculpture,” *Frieze Magazine*, June 16, 2009, <http://www.frieze.com/article/one-day-sculpture>.

For a small organisation like TT, with a meagre budget and limited human resources, there is no option to have a commission become compromised.²¹ There are many pitfalls producing a work via distance. Communication is limited to email and Skype and knowing this meant that TT's team became more self-conscious than usual to make sure Sierra received our best practice.

While TT's **A** can be easily read as a blatant anti-dairy metaphor this was not the intention. Of course in the finished work it is hard to overlook the obvious significance of a giant effigy of milk being mowed down by bullets in the context of the word KAPITALISM being chopped, sawn, hammered, cut, eaten, set on fire and pushed over en mass.

While it seems as though *Destroyed Word* is a blind critique of capitalism the deeper meaning is much more complicated. What Santiago has demonstrated incessantly throughout his practice is that we are all complicit and part of hegemonic systems. He benefits from participating in the art market while also making work that critically mirrors the same system of exploitation. Likewise, there may not be much so called 'trickle down' in the New Zealand economy but 'we' as a people are all responsible for maintaining a nation state that allows iniquitous business practices to exist.



Santiago Sirrea, *Destroyed Word* 2012 (film stills letter 'A' New Zealand). HD video, 24:08 mins, 200 litres of milk, 500 rounds of ammunition, plasterboard. Commissioned and produced by TT.

²¹ TT is a non-profit art organisation that receives just under half of its funding from the Auckland Council and raises the other half through room hire, art classes, long term leases and investments. For more information see: "TT's Annual Report to Auckland Council" (Auckland, N.Z: Contemporary Art Foundation/TT Contemporary Art Trust, 2013), http://www.tetuhi.org.nz/files/downloads/CAF_AnnualReport_2013-2014b.pdf.

Furthermore, dairy farming is not necessarily the malevolent capitalist driven industry as might be easy to surmise. After all, dairying in New Zealand was born out of socialist ideologies of a worker's cooperative in which the farmers share in the profit and the power to direct the company they are part of.²² The dairy giant also claims to be improving environmental accountability by implementing a programme to bring farms up to required standards.²³ Aside from Fonterra there are alternative cooperative entities such as the Organic Dairy Hub Cooperative and other small companies that encourage sustainable methods of farming that go against the grain of intensified farming.

In this light, Sierra's *Destroyed Word* is profoundly nuanced through the specific resonance that each letter has within the context of its making. The New Zealand **A** could be simultaneously understood as a hooting tooting shooting celebration of collective wealth as equally as it could an emblematic act of subversion against growing inequality, environmental pollution or as a statement referring to the country's bloody colonial past and the people that continue to profit off pilfered land. Equally the significance of an aluminium **L** in Iceland has a different reading to the concrete **M** in Sweden – both are locally produced inert materials that have had positive impacts upon these countries but also varying negative social and environmental affects.²⁴

The method of destruction and the labour employed also adds varying significance for each location but also in comparison to each other creating inter-complexities within the work as a whole. There is a striking contrast in forms of labour displayed when comparing the Papua New Guinea hardwood **I** being laboriously axed down by hand in contrast to the power tools used in both Austria and Germany to cut down letters made of much softer MDF and foam. Or the **I** made of excrement in India that is unsophisticatedly pushed over on a vacant piece of land and the **K** made of brush wood fencing which was spectacularly burnt down while illuminating a crowd of hundreds in Australia.²⁵

²² "BEST PRACTICE Fonterra's Model of Good Corporate Governance," *Fonterra*, accessed July 6, 2015, <http://www.management.co.nz/articles/best-practice-fonterra-model-good-corporate-governance>.

²³ "Fonterra - Our Business."

²⁴ "Santiago Sierra: Destroyed Word," *Baltic Art Center*, accessed July 6, 2015, <http://archive.balticartcenter.com/destroyed-word/>.

²⁵ Goya Dmytryshchak, "Capital Idea Ignites Festival," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 11, 2012, <http://www.smh.com.au/action/printArticle?id=3703788>.

On a collective scale, *Destroyed Word* stands against a system where speculative immaterial labour runs rampant over the hard graft of the working class; a system where the high cost of living is caused by monopolisation; and a system where corrupt individuals hide behind finance companies and banks who, in many countries post the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, have been bailed out with taxpayers' money. The work also stands for a desire to not necessarily demonise particular industries but rather to end a cycle of exploitation that many at the bottom of the economic ladder are part of, but powerless within.

During his artist talk in Auckland, Sierra shared that he is currently focusing on making artwork that is useful to the public as icons that empower resistance against an era of monstrous capitalism and 'crisis' – a type of propaganda for the people – and to make bold symbols that are at once universal but that also pertain to the complexities of specific places.²⁶



Santiago Sierra, *Destroyed Word*, 2012. (installation view TT, Auckland). 10 channel HD video installation 24:08 mins. Commissioned and produced by the artist together with: Baltic Arts Center, Visby, Sweden; CAC, Brétigny, France; Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide, Australia; INCUBATE Festival, Tilburg, Netherlands; KOW, Berlin, Germany; Kunstverein Medienturm, Graz, Austria; Melbourne Arts Festival, Australia; TT, Auckland, New Zealand; Reykjavik Art Museum, Iceland. Courtesy of Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide. Supported by NGV. Production Coordinators: Bruce E. Phillips & James McCarthy, TT Centre for the Arts; Paul Greenaway, Greenaway Art Gallery & GAGProjects; Alexander Koch, KOW Berlin.

²⁶ Santiago Sierra, "Destroyed Word" (Lecture, Elam School of Fine Arts, The University of Auckland, February 2013).

Destroyed Word achieves this goal on many levels. The first thing that struck me was how compelling the sound of destruction is, like a multi-headed monster that is frightening but intensely intriguing. At TT, visitors were able to experience every sound one at a time by standing directly underneath independent speakers linked to each channel of video, or they could appreciate the zoo-like cacophony by standing further back. The sound joined to the image is especially important as it helps to connect the audience to the labour performed in each scene – creating what critic Mark Amery called “the work’s visual musicality”. He writes:

There’s a beautiful accidental music to the way each of the actions in the work interrelate and yet are so different. There’s a nice tension between typographical order and anarchic destruction. Cinematically it’s all rather gripping: it’s hard to leave until you’ve seen each letter toppled, chopped, burnt or devoured.²⁷

This performative power was apparent at TT’s opening where an attentive crowd, packed into the gallery, was transfixed by the 14 metre long spectacle before them and once the word was destroyed a roar of applause filled the room. Throughout the five months of the exhibition, visitors of all ages continued to respond in applause.



A full house audience experiencing *Destroyed Word* at TT’s exhibition opening. Photo courtesy of Te Tuhi, Auckland.

This was the first time I had witnessed such an occurrence in an art gallery for a moving image work. Why did people feel compelled to clap? What are they celebrating? And how is this artwork performing some significance for them? Perhaps

²⁷ Mark Amery, “The Fest Test: Cars and Scoria,” *The Big Idea*, September 3, 2013, <https://www.thebigidea.nz/news/columns/mark-amery-visual-arts/2013/mar/127991-the-fest-test-cars-and-scoria>.

this strong reaction is due to the power of the recorded action to achieve one single goal – the satisfaction of destroying capitalism. The audience can virtually attain the same pleasure by witnessing destruction as I had pulling the trigger of the .45 Magnum – maximum destruction with little effort and significant power through advanced agency. Santiago Sierra destroyed capitalism and the people of Auckland agreed through their applause.

Overall, this project was compelling for TT and for me as a curator. As a conventional solo exhibition it satisfied TT's institutional requirements by being a major show by a famous artist that was an easily marketable and meaningful spectacle. From the perspective of curating, it required collaboration, adaptability, socio-political relevance, in-depth research and to exercise transparency – all of which are principles on par with the curatorial turn. In the next half of this chapter I further explore this 'betwixt' mode of curating through the second solo exhibition case study: William Pope.L's *The Long White Cloud*.

Curating William Pope.L's *The Long White Cloud*

Sonny: I think there's something wrong with me.²⁸

The Opening. It is jet black and silent, 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . 6 . . . 7 . . . 8 . . . 9 . . . 10 . . . house lights on . . . actors centre stage . . . applause . . . actors bow and exit. I observe a stunned audience staggering down steps and exiting the gallery that had transformed into a small theatre.

About 60 minutes earlier, this gallery was packed to the brim with an eager audience wide-eyed and unsuspecting of what was to unfold. Talking to people afterwards, I find they were either deeply troubled, perplexed and searching for polite words, or enthusiastically blown away. All are understandable reactions. For this audience were subjected to a menacing, mind-fucking and history-muddling storyline of David Lynch-like disquiet with Samuel Beckett-like wordplays and existential crisis. The artwork in question is *The Long White Cloud* (2013), a live play and installation by prominent Chicago-based artist William Pope.L, commissioned and produced by TT.

²⁸ William Pope.L, *The Long White Cloud*, Performance and installation, 2013.

In this work, an unusual narrative is performed by a cast of three actors, two who play multiple characters, grappling overt and latent themes of love, language, race, beauty and troubled by bleakly absurd forms of sexual, mental and physical abuse. The abuse is not violence for shock and awe but is used as a metaphor for poverty, institutional racism, colonialism, nationalism and income inequality – a masticated medley of issues all of which can be mangled together as insidious strategies; used to control populations directly as straightforward oppression; and indirectly by increasing the likelihood of domestic abuse that so sadly circulates through families and communities.

Pope.L: Social conditioning is a form of molestation.²⁹

The Motivation. Pope.L is an intriguing artist to me because he is able to merge the murky cultural and political significance of art production together with the materiality of its making – qualities that have led him to blend a soiled conceptualism and a social conscience within a complex reverie.

I first made contact with Pope.L in 2011 to explore the potential of exhibiting his ongoing series of text-based drawings in a group show called *WDYMW?* (2012).³⁰ These works explore both nonsensical and racially charged phrases such as: “WHITE PEOPLE ARE THE SKY THE ROPE AND THE BONFIRE”, “BLACK PEOPLE ARE THE RAIN AGAINST THE WINDSHIELD”, “PURPLE PEOPLE ARE THE END OF ORANGE PEOPLE”. However, in conversation with TT’s then Director James McCarthy I came to the realisation that Pope.L was a figure that would be worth exploring a more in-depth relationship with.

His work had never been exhibited in New Zealand before and was largely unknown in this part of the world – that is unless you happen to be interested in performance art or experimental theatre and if so you would probably be a fanatic Pope.L fan. An additional motivation of exhibiting Pope.L was to increase support for local artists who might be interested in producing artworks that address the complications of race,

²⁹ William Pope.L, “The Long White Cloud: Draft Script,” July 20, 2013.

³⁰ See case study in Chapter One.

gender or class inequality. Artworks that explored these topics were not fashionable at the time within the mainstream of the country's art scene.³¹

Pozzo: The tears of the world are a constant quantity.³²

The Process. Email communication swelled and waned over 12 months or so until finally Pope.L and I had decided to produce a solo exhibition – one that was significantly ambitious enough for him to experiment and for TT to take on a new level of contribution to the local art scene. Initially, Pope.L proposed an extension of his crawl performances where he would emerge from a pool containing 25 tonnes of sugar and would crawl 15 kilometres to downtown Auckland and lay on the road outside the central police headquarters. A few Skype meetings later, the project evolved into a narrative based theatrical production that would nod towards New Zealand's colonial context.



Model of stage set, made by Andrew Kennedy, Exhibition Manager and Assistant Curator, TT.
Based on sketch and concept by William Pope.L. Photo by Andrew Kennedy.

This decisive shift required TT to transform its main gallery space into a small theatre with a modular stage set capable of being reconfigured at the artist's request. Pope.L made a sketch of the stage; TT produced a model based on his plans; Pope.L produced a script; TT held auditions; Pope.L reviewed the auditions via video links; TT

³¹ Anthony Byrt, "Prospect: New Zealand Art Now," *Artforum*, 2012, <https://artforum.com/inprint/issue=201205§ion=wellington>.

³² Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot: A Tragicomedy in Two Acts* (London: Faber & Faber, 1952).

employed a set designer, a director of photography, a sound engineer, a lighting desk operator, a couple of director's assistants and a wardrobe consultant; Pope.L conversed with the actors via Skype. He finally arrived after 20 hours of travelling on a Tuesday afternoon and we moved directly into rehearsals and filming the following day. By the start of the proceeding week we were in the editing suite cutting the raw footage that would then be configured into a video projected within the installation component of the exhibition. These practical considerations of time, labour, expertise and planning are vital aspects of the exhibition making process that require the curator's input at all stages particularly when the artist is absent.

Despite all this organisation, it was crucial that TT retained a method of working to accommodate Pope.L's Dada-esque and improvisational sensibilities. In my research I learnt that this is a key condition in his practice that enables him to probe for slippages of intent and meaning within language, materiality, form, history, politics and social behaviour. This aspect of allowing change to occur presented a challenge within the conventional solo exhibition format and required more curatorial sensibilities to be incorporated in the negotiation between the artist and TT.

Having absorbed the script, concluded auditions and in the midst of set construction, Pope.L and I had to also work around the organisational needs to promote a project that still needed the option to grow. We also had to find a way of including the public in this idea of art not being something fixed and knowable but something continually susceptible to change – a hard sell in our current age of entertainment and event culture that favours clear communication and easy to understand ideas. For in truth, Pope.L's project was an entity in continual flux and unpredictability – a precarious form that reflects the volatility of the individual within society – a character that is betwixt between being hostile and accommodating towards social submission.

Seeking out the knife-edge of uncertainty and contradiction has been an important influence throughout Pope.L's practice and life. He explains:

I'm suspicious of things that make easy sense . . . whereas contradiction does make sense to me. When I was able to accept that something could be true, and not true, I felt at home . . . For example, one of the hardest paradigms is that your family can hurt you, and love you at the same time. How can that be possible? . . . but being able to accept that contradiction at this level has been a

guiding principle for me; it's not an answer, it's a positioning that's always unstable.³³

For his solo exhibition at TT, Pope.L sought to create what he termed a 'format-performance' accommodating a type of play existing in competing versions: live, recorded and edited. Through these different formats uncertainty was explored through an unfolding drama that acted out difficult family relationships as a microcosm of larger societal dysfunctions. Overall, the work was informed by a series of interrelated enquiries including an attempt to find solidarity between the national and the individual, a search for clarity in a 'post-race' culture as it supposedly exists in the United States and New Zealand today, to question what *is* such a culture and what does it feel like? It also explored the impossibility of truly connecting to another's situation or history.

Given this content and approach to the work, it was important at the moment of promoting the exhibition that I was accurate and careful with language. This approach was critical in order to resist possible concluding statements that would profile the project as one particular thing. For it was indeed a project in the throes of becoming and was undoing itself through the meta-complexities of melding two connected but vastly different geo-political conditions. As Pope.L elucidates:

So this history we want to make, this play, this song of in-betweenness will be about not knowing who we are and using the mask of, let's say for example the history of the United States or Aotearoa or my father or your mother or some fictional hybrid character made of bits of your mom, Māori culture and southern American black culture – this mask could be true and based on supportable evidence but if I use this mask to hide my face then there's that – isn't it?³⁴

Walker: Yeah. Well, like the inside of a labyrinth the color of a Rorschach, right?³⁵

The Critique. This complicated ambiguity in the work led to misunderstandings amongst some local practitioners. Their concern being the lack of time that Pope.L

³³ Martha Wilson, "Interview: William Pope.L," *Bomb Magazine*, 1996, <http://bombsite.com/issues/55/articles/1957>.

³⁴ Bruce E. Phillips and William Pope.L, "William Pope.L: The Long White Cloud," *TT*, 2013, <http://www.tetuhi.org.nz/exhibitions/exhibitiondetails.php?id=129>.

³⁵ Pope.L, *The Long White Cloud*.

had spent in the country to become aware of the specific endemic issues in which his work partially references. He was scrutinised and compared to the growing trend of high profile ‘international artists’ that make a habit of flying into foreign countries or communities to tackle topical issues but fall short due to naive assumptions or misaligned agendas. This perspective was expressed in a review of the live performance written by artist and academic Mark Harvey. He writes:

In *The Long White Cloud* he’s taken on the challenge of getting a crash course in Aotearoa’s race relations, history and colonisation, spending no more than a week in person . . . what would he know about the complexities of Aotearoa, we might ask? . . . Is this just another American internationalist and colonising reading of us here in Aotearoa?³⁶

Within New Zealand some people hold an inherent distrust of Americans, considering them as arrogant, culturally insensitive, socially backwards and, in the schoolyard logic of global politics, a bully of smaller nations. Therefore, in so many words Harvey profiles Pope.L as the brash American visitor – a critique that I believe reveals a level of great discomfort towards an outsider who has the nerve to contribute towards a New Zealand discourse that perhaps Harvey feels protective of. This reaction is familiar to me because I also had similar hesitations about Pope.L’s work. After all, being a citizen of the United States must to some degree embed the nation’s political psyche within one’s worldview. I have learnt that it is important for curators to question not only their own latent bias but also to be alert to the potential bias of others. For bias is subliminally contagious through words and actions. Although after devoting sustained time with the project in its many forms I have come to the realisation that the suspicion of American imperialism and misappropriation is a misattributed reading of the work – a confusion between the presentation of fictionalised abuse and the actual practice of abusing another’s context.

In the Rorschach test there is nothing on the page but ambiguous symmetrical ink clouds but yet we perceive things that trigger thoughts, desires, fears and biases all feed to us through our subconscious. So too it seems that Pope.L and his artwork trigger a threat within the Pākehā psyche – one that, if I am truly honest, is motivated by a considerable amount of inherited colonial guilt and one that secretly wishes to ‘protect’ this country’s colonial discourse. This ‘protection’ is driven by a latent

³⁶ Mark Harvey, “Sweet and Bitter Pope.L,” *EyeContact*, March 11, 2013, <http://eyecontactsite.com/2013/09/sweet-and-bitter>.

selfish if not sinister desire that seeks to *own* the struggle of Māori and to limit the discourse to that of a strictly bicultural conversation.³⁷ By wanting to maintain a legitimate position within the discourse, Pākehā take on the delusion that they are gracious liberators willing to relinquish their privilege but in reality they secretly wish to maintain power by shutting down the possibility of outside influence.

This is a dynamic tension that the work has been able to engender. However, to limit *The Long White Cloud* to implicating the id of white privilege would do a grave disservice to the many other more interesting aspects such as the multi-layered dialogue, the blurring of familial personas and the manipulative power of historic narratives.

Dr. Bledsoe: . . . for God's sake, learn to look beneath the surface . . . Come out of the fog, young man . . . Play the game, but don't believe in it.³⁸

The Characters: Pope.L lands and stirs the pot – a mixture of histories and thorny cultural assertions – and then exits. While the concerns of unethical practice by a 'jet-setting' artist are indeed worthy of consideration they are somewhat redundant in this instance. Pope.L's experimental perceptiveness operates in a way that avoids any absolute claims, damning critique or essentialist commentary. He never intended, nor was expected, to make an artwork *about* New Zealand but rather planned on seeking commonality with his own experience in order to establish some sort of dialogue.

As his drawn text works illustrate, there is an absurdity in the language we use to classify people and how we in turn are willing or coerced to be classified. Likewise, in *The Long White Cloud* he was seeking a common ground through the telling of stories, the manifestation of national identity, and the formation of the family as a nucleus for society. This is most apparent in Pope.L's creation of the characters who he explains in the opening credits in subsequent 2014 edit of the video component:

Samuel Christopher as: 1. Sonny; 2. The truth-ivist; 3. Symbolic of New Zealand.

³⁷ Ani Mikaere, *Colonising Myths - Maori Realities: He Rukuruku Whakaaro* (Huia Publishers, 2013), 100–102.

³⁸ Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, New Ed edition 2001 (London: Penguin Classics, 1952), 153.

Aruna Po-Ching as: 1. Mother; 2. Possibly her younger self; 3. Female high school friend, Cooper, based on a Māori activist; 4. The Intentionalist; 5. Symbolic of Great Britain; 6. Symbolic of the Author.

Steven Bain as: 1. Father; 2. Possibly his younger self; 3. Male high school friend, Seddon, based on a former prime minister; 4. Factory worker, Ranginui Walker based on the Māori activist; 5. The Constructivist; 6. Symbolic of America.

Directors Notes: 1. Sugar is not an export of New Zealand; 2. New Zealand is a former colony of Great Britain, currently friendly with the United States; 3. All the characters are real including you.³⁹

Here, Pope.L lists not just the multiple characters that each actor plays but the plural attitudes and motifs that each holds within the frame of the play and also within reality beyond the frame of the theatre, gallery or camera. These meta-levels of persona absorption makes *The Long White Cloud* a confounding case of social psychology. In saying so, he does leave us some compelling ciphers within the script and stage presence that pulls the audience through the tangle of implied signifiers.



William Pope.L, *The Long White Cloud*, 2013 (video still of scene 6). HD video, 23:01 mins, installation and live performance. Commissioned by TT, Auckland

³⁹ Pope.L, *The Long White Cloud*.

Scene 6. In the factory, Walker catches Sonny daydreaming on the job of which we learn is because he is sleep-deprived due to using his bed, the bed of his parents' consummation, to imprison his Mother: "so –I tied her up to it. Now she eats in that bed. Sleeps and cries and shits in that bed. Just like I did." After Sonny's outburst Walker then launches into a story. Walker, I should add, is modelled on the late Ranginui Walker, noted by Pope.L as a Māori activist but many New Zealanders would recognise him as a leading academic and historian known for his seminal text *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End* – a book that fuses Māori creation myths and political realities to create a rigorous and persuasive narrative of the worldview mismatch between Māori and Europeans – an incongruity that has been used as a colonising strategy by the Crown and a tactic of subversion on part of Māori.

Picking up on the power of story construction within the Māori oral tradition, Pope.L gives the character Walker the role of storyteller, the soothsayer, the elucidator but also the manipulator of Sonny's mind and understanding of history. The story he tells is of the extinction of the piopio bird but in this telling the species are anthropomorphised: "These island piopio were special. Their loss of flight was compensated by their ability to read and write". This morphs into an account of the Treaty of Waitangi as not just an agreement between people but also that of family:

they [the piopio] wrote a treaty between nation and family: how nation begets family and how family begets children . . . all this begetting. Nation begetting family, family begetting children. What's it all about?⁴⁰

In this one scene, many neural pathways of association are bridged between related but ill conjoined subjects crafted together as one. The montage of related but misplaced content is mixed to provide an uncanny resemblance of issues and histories that are present simultaneously on the levels of individual, family and nation. It is through this awareness that Pope.L's characters begin to reflect the construction of the 'self' – how we as complex beings form and reform our sense of identity through nature and nurture, through actor and character, and also, I would argue, through artist and artwork. We create certain and stable personas built upon unstable personal neurosis and upon all too persuasive stories of social collectively.

⁴⁰ Pope.L, *The Long White Cloud*.

This reading is reinforced in the second to last scene where a near naked Stephen Bain having adorned himself in body paint proceeds to improvise a type of haka. Sonny then arrives at his Father's place to meet Bain who, now playing Father wearing a bowler hat and a red painted 'NZ' emblazoned on his bare chest, sits on a stool sipping a can of Lion Red beer. This character posing as Sonny's Father is also simultaneously an insidious amalgam of Walker, former prime New Zealand minister Richard John Seddon, a symbol of the condescending paternal America and what Bain personally finds within himself to bring to the role.

Other references can be inferred here, inadvertent to Pope.L a near naked Stephen Bain having adorned himself in body paint proceeds to improvise a type of haka. Sonny then arrives visually apparent in the bowler hat-wearing tekoteko that takes prominent position upon the apex of *Te Tākinga pātaka* – a late-nineteenth century pātaka on permanent display in the Mana Whenua exhibition at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. The tekoteko represents the pātakahenua exhibition at the Museum of New Z and a prominent warrior chief. There is also the story of the King Country being named after the Waikato Chief and Māori King Tāwhiao who, so it is told, placed his hat on a North Island map to designate the land he claimed under his rule, thus, Te Rohe Pōtae (the district of the hat).



William Pope.L, *The Long White Cloud*, 2013 (video still). HD video, 33:01 mins, installation and live performance.
Commissioned by TT, Auckland

Māori absorbing and re-appropriating the power signifiers present in European fashion is also seen in Charles Goldie's 1905 painting 'All 'e Same t'e Pākehā' (Te Aho-o-te-Rangi Wharepu, Ngāti Mahuta).⁴¹ Rendered though Goldie's paintbrush the symbolism of the hat becomes conflicted due to the painter's motivation to document, in a gilded sense of wonderment, the dwindling legacy of what he considered a 'dying race'. The bowler hat in this instance becomes an emblem of Māori being submissively assimilated within a European-dominated civilisation rather than being evidence of savvy resilience to subversively take on the mana of another culture.

A further reference could be made to the stocky beer-guzzling Caucasian 'NZ'-marked aspect of the Father character and his resemblance to the delinquent figures in the paintings of Tony de Latour. In painting such as *Blackhead* (1995) or *Shore Party* (1999) de Latour illustrates redneck 'kiwi yobbos' sporting 'NZ' tattoos and trashing the postcard perfect vista with beer bottles. In light of these inferences, the Father could be considered as a ritualistic Pākehā male figure infested with absolute signifiers of nationhood and kiwi-esque characteristics – he is a monster caught between self, family and nation. Making Pope.L aware of these unintentional references is an important aspect in curating projects with a visiting artist. It is vital that artists are informed of the specific nuances that a local audience might pick up on.

Cooper: I heard you got lost.⁴²

The Installation: Pope.L's notes 20 July, 2013:

This project . . . consists of two versions (that are cousins) operating together but at different points in the life of the project . . . The installation version of the play is an edited video . . . viewed from behind the set wall. The audience and set areas remain in the same condition unchanged as they were after the performance. Any programs or trash in the audience seating or props or debris on stage remain as part of the installation.⁴³

If the installation is indeed a 'cousin' of the live performance, as Pope.L mentions, then it is a distant relative that knows all the dark family secrets but is one step

⁴¹ See collection of Dunedin Public Art Gallery:
<http://collection.dunedin.art.museum/search.do?view=detail&page=1&id=29191&db=object>

⁴² Pope.L, *The Long White Cloud*.

⁴³ Pope.L, "The Long White Cloud: Draft Script."

removed. As instructed by Pope.L, after the performance all detritus was left undisturbed apart from a few minor details. The hired theatre spotlights were removed and replaced with dimmed gallery lighting, which provided the type of intimacy that a desk lamp provides at night. Another change was that the projection screen used during the performance was now blacked out from the front so that the video component could only be viewed from back stage.

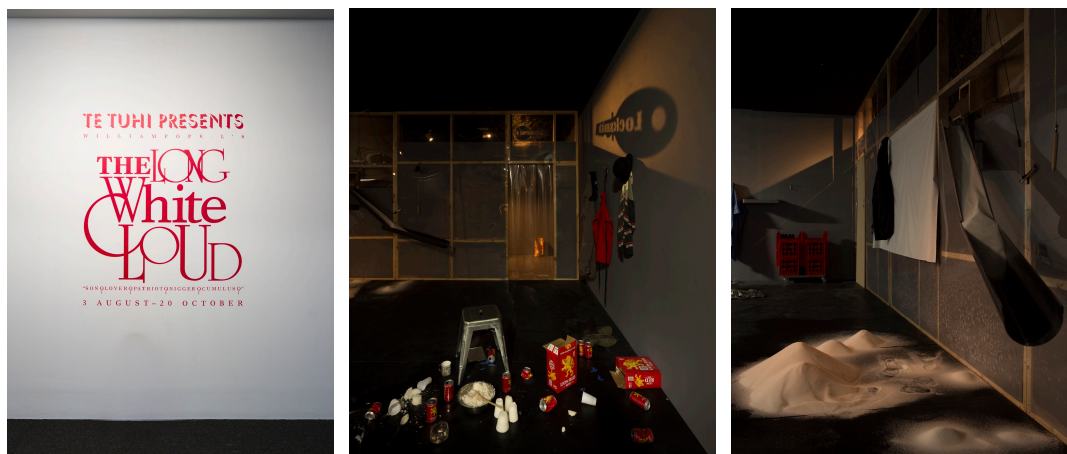
It was an unusual exhibition experience. ‘Haunting’ is an adjective that was most often used to describe it. After passing the gallery signage exhibition visitors were confronted with a row of racked seating to the left, a dimly lit stage in front, a brighter spotlight illuminating the backstage, and the eerie sounds of screaming or stern dialogue reverberating throughout the space.



William Pope.L, *The Long White Cloud*, 2013 (installation view). HD video, 33:01 mins, installation and live performance. Commissioned by TT, Auckland, Photo by Sam Hartnett.

Most visitors were captivated by the work’s sonic qualities by listening to the vaporous dialogue from the derelict seating. Others who were bold or inquisitive enough ventured backstage and were rewarded with the projected film. A few lingered upon the threshold of the stage tiptoeing around beer cans and cigarette butts to inspect other strewn props and costumes or being tempted to run fingers through the mound of sugar. Either viewed from in front, behind or upon the stage there was

no one correct experience for all were equally valid forms of engagement and each offered its own rewards or disappointments.



William Pope.L, *The Long White Cloud*, 2013 (installation views: left – exhibition signage; centre and right – view on top of stage). HD video, 33:01 mins, installation and live performance. Commissioned by TT, Auckland, photos by Sam Hartnett



William Pope.L, *The Long White Cloud*, 2013 (backstage installation view). HD video, 33:01 mins, installation and live performance. Commissioned by TT, Auckland, photo by Sam Hartnett.

It is the installation that was less threatening to some visitors I spoke to – an indication of what the visceral effect a live performance can have upon a seated audience. In contrast, the installation allowed people to wander about at their own pace and because of this it demystified the play by stripping away the fourth wall. For those that did not witness the live performance, the installation sometimes supported the contradictory feeling that a sinister violent encounter had been concealed.

Operating in this more open-ended and conflicting capacity, the installation was an abject remnant that allowed access but also hid information. Overall, the installation meddled with fragments of the live and recorded material. As with all good story telling, Pope.L edited it and regurgitated it back out in to the world in a different but uncanny form where it might continue to beguile, confound or subversively encourage resistance.

Despite being grouped within the trope of a traditional solo exhibition, *The long White Cloud* by William Pope.L was distinctly subversive and experimental. The artist resisted institutional requirements of didactic interpretation and the simplistic language of marketing. The process of producing the exhibition also had many twists and turns that required the performative, collaborative, interdisciplinary and discursive curatorial aptitudes. Therefore, both Sierra's and Pope.L's solo exhibitions present an incongruity for conventional curating that at times relied upon traditional practice while other times had more progressive requirements. In the next chapter I shift the focus away from conventional exhibition forms to examine two exhibition case studies that are aligned to the curatorial turn.

Chapter Three: Process-led Exhibitions

Exhibitions are no longer so much about selecting or organising, but making . . . This is a process of many dimensions: physical, human, intellectual, political, ethical, spiritual and more . . . I feel it's the *process* that I'm curating, taking care of, and keeping open in order for art to happen.¹

— Mary Jane Jacob

In the last two chapters, I have explored the most conventional forms of curating – the group exhibition and the solo exhibition. This chapter will focus on the process-led exhibition. As discussed in the introduction, over the last 30 years or more the demystification of traditional exhibition practices has been influential in informing many alternative curatorial approaches grouped within what has been called the curatorial turn.² Methodologies of the curatorial turn extol the virtues of institutional critique, acknowledge the time-based qualities of exhibition making and the realisation that curating should not be about one author but a network of agents in the field.³ For the most part, these approaches have effectively challenged the agency of the curator by requiring transparency, collaboration and greater rigor in designing the process.⁴

However, it is important to be attentive to a curator's *actual* practice to ascertain whether there is sufficient evidence of a process to support the methodological claims that they might make.⁵ The evidence of process within a methodology is a particularly crucial aspect in the politics of curating because it can reveal veiled power relationships and disclose the constraints placed upon the artists.⁶

Therefore, it is vital that all aspects of the curatorial process are scrutinised so that an exhibition's form might be analysed for its influence on the creation of meaning. This train of thought is what has influenced the two process-led exhibitions discussed in this chapter: *Close Encounters* and *Unstuck in Time*. Both of these exhibitions are

¹ Jacob et al., *Show Time*, 244.

² Jens Hoffmann, ed., "New Forms," in *Show Time: The 50 Most Influential Exhibitions of Contemporary Art* (New York, NY: D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, Inc., 2014).

³ Lind, "Active Cultures: Maria Lind on the Curatorial"; O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*; Smith and Fowle, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*.

⁴ Paul O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse," in *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance* (Bristol: Interllect, 2007), 13–28; Smith and Fowle, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*.

⁵ O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse."

⁶ Ibid.

indicative of the curatorial turn and as such it should be possible to discern their difference from more conventional modes of curating. As the curator Jens Hoffman writes, these new exhibition forms produced/influenced/shaped/by the curatorial turn should “rejuvenate or even overthrow certain well-known exhibition formats” by taking “artists’ projects, ideas and movements as inspiration for curatorial experimentation.”⁷

Curating *Close Encounters*

Auckland, 2:57 p.m. on Sunday, 24 May 2015. Just over 10 years ago I arrived in a snow-clad Chicago to undertake a curatorial internship at the Museum of Contemporary Art. This opportunity was made possible by a couple of generous patrons and connections made through two colleagues, Mercedes Vicente and Charlotte Huddleston at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery where I was working at the time. I mention this helping hand in order to emphasise the importance of sector support and collegiality but also to declare the influence of those who have had a significant influence on my own direction both through inspiration and generosity.

It was through Vicente’s connections that found me being billeted by Chuck Thurow the then Executive Director of the Hyde Park Art Centre (HPAC) and the late Dale Hillerman, a retiree and patron of the Field Museum of Natural History (FMoNH), Chicago. It was through the connection with Chuck that sparked a project that would unfold over another five years and influence the careers of eight artists and many others in subsequent years. This project came to be called *Close Encounters (CE)* but before I delve into the specifics it is important that more context is provided to emphasise how a small meeting of artists and curators is only one part of a much larger complex network of people across time as a “trajectory of unfinished stories”.⁸

The HPAC, is a dynamic community art space and a contemporary art gallery and is recognised as Chicago’s most experimental public gallery, with a similar function to TT in Auckland where I currently work. It has been in operation since the 1940s and from the beginning has had a very strong relationship with artists and in many cases has been critical in launching artists’ careers. It is located on the Southside of Chicago,

⁷ Hoffmann, “New Forms,” 16, 155.

⁸ Doreen Massey, “Some Times of Space,” in *Time: Whitechapel Documents of Contemporary Art Series* (London: Whitechapel, 2003), 117–118.

which is an area that takes up 60 per cent of the city and is at least twice the land area of the entire Auckland region.

The Southside has a population of approximately 800,000 that is over 93 per cent African-American and is predominantly a very poor area with a high crime rate. Hyde Park, however, is a small wealthy suburb that is centred around the University of Chicago and has been the home of some of the most famous African-Americans including Muhammad Ali and currently Barack Obama. Although, if you drive a few blocks in any direction you end up in some of Chicago's most impoverished ghettos. This location gives the HPAC a unique cross-section of people and communities that visit the Center for art classes, community meetings, events and to experience contemporary art. Therefore, engaging with local communities is a primary purpose of the HPAC.

Chicago, April 2007. I was invited back to Chicago by Chuck to be the HPAC's international curator in residence with the intention of developing an ambitious artist exchange and experimental curatorial project between the city of Chicago and New Zealand. My residency was also timed to coincide with a delegation of Māori leaders visiting the FMoNH. This delegation were visiting to discuss the museum's ownership and use of *Ruatepūpuke II* housed at the FMoNH in Chicago – the only wharenui in North America and is one of just three complete wharenui outside of New Zealand. Under unknown circumstances, this majestic whare was acquired by a German curio dealer and finally ended up in the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. Almost a century later, it was 'rediscovered' by New Zealanders when the *Te Maori* exhibition travelled to the FMoNH in 1986.

Now in 2007, Chuck and I attended a pōwhiri held at *Ruatepūpuke II* and after meeting with members of the Ngāti Porou hapu Te Whānau a Ruataupare (of Tokomaru Bay on the East Coast) and FMoNH's Curator of Pacific Anthropology John Terrell we became very interested in the rich historical connection forged between Chicago and New Zealand. Furthermore, the intersection of that delegation with the museum's staff, trustees and with the museum's visitors embodied many of the complex cultural issues that are the root of divisions and confrontations in this global age. We saw, in both the emotion and civility of this interaction, a model by

which to challenge a group of artists from New Zealand and Chicago to tackle the persistent issues surrounding the divisions of different social groupings and their function in a multicultural society – an issue so pertinent for organisations such as the HPAC who service a great diversity of people.

We were also driven by the desire to create a situation through which new forms of engagement might emerge and also by bringing artists from these two nations together because of their striking similarities and dissimilarities. Both countries were colonised by the same European culture, which imposed its value system upon sophisticated existing cultures that at the time were identified as ‘primitive’. At the same time, the two current countries are both literally and figuratively at opposite ends of the world. As a consequence, the dialogue we hoped might emerge among the artists and curators would be unlikely to rely on familiar formulas and more likely to encourage new forms of practice.

Following this motivation, we then proceeded to select artists not just for our strong belief in their practice but also to assemble a group who were from a variety of different social/cultural backgrounds to ensure dynamic participation. These were United States-based artists Tania Bruguera, Juan Angel Chávez, Walter Hood, Truman Lowe and four New Zealand-based artists Daniel du Bern, Maddie Leach, Lisa Reihana and Wayne Youle.

The central aim of *CE* was to explore social gatherings and their venues, with the objective of encouraging new forms of engagement between artists, art institutions and communities. In his study of cafes, pubs, bookstores and other ‘hangouts’, Ray Oldenburg emphasises the importance of social gathering spaces to community coherence. He argues that these gathering spaces can not only encourage communal synergy but also creative problem solving – problem solving that can lead to significant community and cultural transformation.⁹

The history of social engagement art projects has shown that the arts can also generate similar results.¹⁰ This latent potential, however, raises a raft of questions that Chuck and I asked the artists to debate: Can cultural gatherings be both inclusive of other

⁹ Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community*, 3rd edition (New York : Berkeley, Calif.: Marlowe & Company, 1999).

¹⁰ Mary Jane Jacob, “Outside the Loop,” in *Culture in Action* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995); Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*; Doherty, “Art in the Life of the City: London Stories.”

groups and retain tradition? To what degree does the design of physical space mediate or influence social interaction? And, if contemporary artistic practice has proven to generate both constructive and disruptive social encounters, what ethical responsibilities do artists have to society?

To provoke these questions we decided to expose artists to a diversity of community and social gatherings – with the idea that the artists’ experiences would be shared, debated and finally explored through their artistic practice. To achieve this goal, we planned to follow a discursive model in which artistic and curatorial development might evolve simultaneously – acknowledging full well the conceit of this sentiment – that we as curators essentially retained the power of selection, invitation and institutional resource. However, we hoped to disrupt this curatorial power by opening it up to share this with the artists and to give them agency.

It was hoped that this open-ended and adaptable approach would birth new perspectives and experiences of culture and prove a rigorous challenge to both artistic and curatorial practice. We were aware that it is a great challenge to lump a whole set of challenges on to a group of artists in the expectation that they would go forth and expand upon them. Therefore, we put considerable effort into giving the artists a series of experiences as a starting point.

New Plymouth, early one morning sometime in April 2008. It is pitch black and I am standing confused and anxious in the middle of my lounge. I am confused because for some reason I have a taiaha in my hands that I am violently and involuntarily thrashing in all directions. While I cannot see because of the thick darkness, I know that Chuck is also in the room and I am frightened that my uncontrollable aggressive actions might injure him. In the morning, I realise the significance of the dream. I have ventured into something that I have knowledge of but lack true understanding.

Ruatepūpuke II, 9 a.m. on Thursday, 15 May 2008. Spine tingling karanga echo through the FMoNH as we walk past displays and vitrines until finally we are standing under the gaze of a hundred soul-piercing pāua shell eyes. This is the pōwhiri signalling Phase One of the *CE* project. The idea of having *Ruatepūpuke II* as

a point of gathering came about through the desire of Te Whānau a Ruataupare the original owners. Te Whānau a Ruataupare have been working with the FMoNH for the last couple of decades since the *Te Maori* exhibition, not to repatriate the whare but to make it a living and functional space rather than a relic within a museum collection.

Under the guidance of the hapū represented by Erū Wharehinga, Director of Mātauranga Māori Arapata Hakiwai from the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongawera, and Director Joe Podlasek of the American Indian Center (AIC), Chicago, we were the first visiting group to commence a hui under the appropriate tikanga. For *Ruatepūpuke II* was also the perfect place to contemplate the role for artists within community – as the whare is itself an amazing work of art that embodies the wairua and function of its original community.

Not only did the pōwhiri ceremonially start the *CE* project but it also played an integral role in building and healing the relationship between Te Whānau a Ruataupare the AIC and the FMoNH. Before *CE*, these groups did not have clearly-defined roles or a cohesive understanding of their part in making *Ruatepūpuke II* being a living space. Therefore, Chuck and I often acted as mediators between all three groups by keeping lines of communication clear and open. For unbeknown to us there were deep wells of historic tension between all those involved. This was acknowledged by Terrell:

Inviting not only four artists from New Zealand but also Eru Wharehinga and Arapata Hakiwai from Tokomaru Bay was a brilliant move. By doing so you . . . have really helped Field Museum and our family out at Tokomaru Bay clarify and advance what is to be the kawa and tikanga for ‘Chicago’s Marae’.¹¹

Furthermore, in preparation for the *CE* project the FMoNH fast tracked major renovations to the display of *Ruatepūpuke II* to make sure that the area was suitable for such a culturally significant event. This included reconstruction of the exhibition space to create a marae ātea and to expose hidden windows that hadn’t been opened for a number of years, allowing natural light to illuminate the space. This major alteration was agreed upon between the FMoNH and Te Whānau a Ruataupare in

¹¹ Personal communication.

previous years but had not been acted upon. The instigation of the *CE* project gave significant reason for these renovations to become a reality.

The FMoNH, like other large traditional museums around the world, maintains a conservation policy of exhibiting artefacts in controlled environments – typically without natural light in favour of artificial lighting. Now that the windows have been uncovered, it is possible to see Chicago's skyline, allowing museum visitors to view *Ruatepūpuke II* in the context of the city of Chicago. These changes made to the area surrounding *Ruatepūpuke II* shows a commitment by the museum to keeping the spirit and cultural significance of their treasures alive in the present.



Jingle dress dancers during the *CE* pōwhiri at *Ruatepūpuke II*, FMoNH in Chicago, May 2008. Photo by Michelle Litvin, courtesy of the Hyde Park Art Centre, Chicago.

To introduce the New Zealand artists to the racial issues of the United States we decided to visit two leading exhibitions on the topic that were being shown at the time. These exhibitions included *Black is, black aint* at the Renaissance Society and *Disinhibition: black art and blue humour* at the HPAC.

After the exhibition tours the *CE* group returned back to *Ruatepūpuke II* for a hui inside the wharenui. The hui was started with a talk about the history and cultural significance of *Ruatepūpuke II* lead by Hakiwai, Terrell and Wharehinga. The talk was followed by individual mihi from everyone in the group. This provided the opportunity for all those involved to both think about their own and everyone else's complex cultural belonging.

Later that evening, the AIC and their community held a large powwow. The event was an exciting cultural experience for everyone. It included a large meal followed by traditional drumming and dancing in which everyone was invited to participate.



Left: dancers at the AIC powwow. Right: Hui project manager Fiona Moorhead, artists Wayne Youle, Lisa Reihana, Tania Bruguera and Te Papa Director of Mātauranga Māori Arapata Hakiwhai. Photos by Michelle Litvin, courtesy of the Hyde Park Art Centre, Chicago.



Left: Artist Walter Hood having his hair cut at a Puerto Rican barbershop as one of the community experience. Photo by Michelle Litvin. Right: A beekeeping co-op established to rehabilitate ex-convicts was another community experience. Photo by Fiona Moorhead.

The following day, we divided the artists and other hui participants up into two groups for a tour of Chicago. We sent one driving North and the other driving South. The tours visited ten large and small community groups and organisations. Ranging

from non-traditional urban groups such as the skateboard and parkour communities to highly organised trusts born from a need to formally function in a social welfare capacity. These included, the Cambodian Center, set up to council and re-educate Cambodian refugees, and the Center on Halsted, which is a LGBTQ community centre that also services all other walks of life.

When the groups returned that evening the north group was buzzing with utopian aspirations. In contrast, the south group returned totally depressed, as their whole day had involved driving through some of Chicago's poorest ghettos. However, it is precisely these positive and negative community encounters that proved vital in inspiring each artist's work and helping them to challenge conventional notions of community.

Due to the in-depth nature of the projects it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the curatorial influence on each. Therefore, I will focus on just two, including *Signs and wonders shall appear* (2010) by Maddie Leach and a social intervention by Tania Bruguera.¹² These two artworks proposed different models of how conceptual artworks can engage with community and set specific challenges to the curatorial parameters of *CE* as a whole.

Beaver Island, on a frosty morning in early October 2010. Maddie Leach concluded two years research by picking apples in the Beaver Archipelago – a small group of islands in northern Lake Michigan. The small remote islands have a combined population of 600 and a peculiar abundance of wild apple trees that were planted by a clandestine religious community called the House of David who retreated there in the late nineteenth century. These apple varieties are now unique to the islands. Some trees are well over one hundred years old.

Leach collaborated with the people of Beaver Island to locate the trees – as many are kept secret or require local knowledge to find them. To do so, she organised a research trip to get to know the islands and the community. Leach instantly became accepted and before she knew it she was invited on hunting trips and was talk of the

¹² Tania Bruguera did not give this artwork a title.

town. To locate the trees Leach also published this advertisement in the local newspaper *The Beaver Beacon*.



Maddie Leach, Beaver Island research images, 2008. Courtesy of the artist.



Maddie Leach, Beaver Bacon advertisement, 2008

Courtesy of the artist.

A year later, Leach returned to the islands and with the help of some locals she collected several crates of wild apples. In Chicago, Leach shared the island's unique produce by a call to interested people to receive a gift of Beaver Island apples. A large hand painted sign on the HPAC's garage door facade announced the arrival of apples from the island and directed local passers-by to a nearby marina where they could receive them. Visitors were given two pounds of apples – the perfect amount for one apple pie. Through this gift exchange Maddie was interested to discover what might

represent Beaver Island, and as a New Zealander something that represents 'islandness', and in turn what could be exchanged with communities in Chicago.

One of the outcomes of this transaction – was good ol' American apple pie. In an associated event at a local organic farmers market, four different apple pies were baked for taste testing, each one containing a different variety of Beaver Island apple. Apples and apple pie are a national obsession in the United States so the offer of free organic heirloom apples caused much excitement and conversation about the island, the people that live there and the history of the apples. For the Beaver Islanders, it drew attention to the wealth of their natural resource and inspired much entrepreneurial spirit about how they could capitalise on their unique apples and recognise the cultural value of their local history.¹³

For the south side of Chicago, the project had a whole different significance because it is in this area that food deserts exist. Food deserts are areas where healthy affordable food is difficult to obtain. On the south side, Supermarket chains refuse to set up stores for fear of crime, resulting in most people buying junk food from convenience stores. So to a poor and also strongly religious population who live in the reality of food deserts, the project *Signs and wonders shall appear* made a generous and poignant statement.

However, while these were some of the most direct outcomes of the project it is just one perspective of how the project could be framed. For example, despite the hundreds of people that engaged with the project on some level Leach insists that the project only reached an audience or community of two people. The reason for this is because there were only two people who read the painted sign and followed the instructions to find the apples at the marina. For Leach, the ideal community she was interested in engaging with was those that took the time to notice and took value in the gift on offer.

¹³ Maddie Leach, "Art, Fruit and Confrontation," *Arts on Sunday* (Radio New Zealand, November 7, 2010), <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/artsonsunday/audio/2429856/art,-fruit,-and-confrontation>.



Maddie Leach, *Signs and wonders shall appear*, 2010. Photos by Bruce E. Phillips.

Most other people either found out through word of mouth or by chance. Throughout the project, Leach resisted the use of mass communication to incite the interest of the local community. There was no social media announcements and no flyers printed, only a hand painted sign on the HPAC garage door that you would have to walk past to read. This, among other aspects of the project, put Leach's work in a risky position of possibly not connecting with anyone. Throughout the development of the project this risk of 'perceived failure' was always an intentional possibility. As an individual and an artist foreign to the location, Leach was conscious of not assuming her right to identify or speak for a particular community or to coerce involvement of people to complete the work.



Maddie Leach, *Signs and wonders shall appear*, 2010
Photo by Bruce E. Phillips

Her aim was to simply provide the conceptual possibility of exchange between two places. This act, of creating the parameters of possibility, makes *Signs and Wonders*

Shall Appear a compelling example of how artists might invite community to participate on their own terms. From a curatorial perspective, it raises the question of quality of experience versus easily consumed ideas that draw in the masses – a tactic often employed in ‘blockbuster’ exhibitions. This is an especially difficult risk to entertain since the success of most publically funded museums and galleries are assessed on their visitor numbers by city governments and funders.

Chicago, 2 p.m. on Sunday, 8 November 2009. It was the last thing anyone expected to happen at a HPAC exhibition opening. For no good reason, or so it seemed, people were asked to queue single file and subjected to stern questioning before being granted entry. Unbeknown to these faithful art lovers, their bemusement, frustration or unfazed acceptance of authority were actually contributing to a performance by Cuban artist Tania Bruguera. A performance designed to simulate how bureaucratic power interferes with societal belonging.

Occupying a desk at the main entrance sat Cecilia Vargas the lead performer who acted as the gatekeeper. There were also two undercover performers who waited in line and initiated casual conversation designed to incite rebellion. Dressed in an authoritative fashion wearing a black shirt, skirt and leather boots Vargas improvised her authority on incoming visitors. Acting under instructions from Bruguera, Vargas used suggestive phrases that did not order people what to do but rather compellingly suggested their submission. In addition, she used body language and an authoritative voice as codes for establishing a power relationship between her and gallery visitors. Using visual markers such as a strip of black carpet Vargas also convinced people to orderly line up single file for questioning. She continued to ask each person statistical information such as name, age, occupation, why were they attending the exhibition opening and what were their expectations. On occasion, when there was not a satisfactory reply, someone would be sent to the back of the queue to consider who they are and why they were visiting.

The performance lasted for about an hour during which the line would naturally form, dissipate and then grow again. The prescience of the line was like a living and constantly changing object. The other interesting aspect was how it worked contrary to the community philosophy and architecture of the HPAC. Being a contemporary art

centre that functions as an inclusive hub for a range of diverse community groups, it was a great surprise to many that they would have to wait and be interrogated. The HPAC is also an open and welcoming institution architecturally since it has many entries into the building rather than just one.

Therefore, those who were familiar with the building, or those smart and cunning enough, could exercise their free will to find an alternative entrance. While others, by default, chose to be compliant and waited quietly in line. Some well-known patrons and curators in the Chicago art community who felt a sense of entitlement and attempted to directly bypass the line. When asked to queue up they stated their importance and refused to comply. There were also a few people that quickly guessed that it was some sort of performance, or who learned once gaining entry, and proceeded to participate in the line numerous times.



Tania Bruguera, (artwork not titled) 2009. Photos by Bruce E. Phillips.

The performance intervened surreptitiously into the social convention of an exhibition opening. It occurred in such a way that most people were not aware of it being a performance. This social intervention was significant to how the majority of people are often willing relinquish their personal information to participate in society. It also proved that it is often small groups of people that question requests and who take the initiative to collectively or individually subvert such assumed authority.

As a Cuban artist, Bruguera knows all too well how structures of power can be enacted since in Cuba it is very hard to intervene and disturb social conventions like this without getting in trouble with the authorities. However, in the context of the United States Bruguera believes there is an even stronger need to intervene in such a furtive manner. She argues that “society should be about freedom, but not in the sense that it is used in the United States where freedom is used in a very antidemocratic and contradictory way”.¹⁴ Rather she wants people to be thinking actively:

Society should be about a group of people getting together to do something, and part of coming together is to think . . . people are not thinking, they are just doing and they let someone else think for them.¹⁵

The curatorial methodology of *CE* posed significant challenges to conventional institutional practices by initiating artistic research, allowing artists to develop their projects on their own timeframe, developing curatorial frameworks and artworks in tandem. The results of this methodology are clearly apparent within the freedom and experimentation of Leach’s and Bruguera’s works.

It would seem, therefore, that innovative practices of the curatorial turn *do* actively resist the stagnating function of institutions.¹⁶ However, is this always the case? Is the curatorial turn really so clear-cut from more conservative approaches? In the second half of this chapter I explore another process-led exhibition case study to further investigate this methodology.

¹⁴ Tania Bruguera, *In Line for Close Encounters*, interview by Bruce E. Phillips, 2009, <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/248-0-In+Line+for+Close+Encounters.htm>.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Möntmann, “Curating with Institutional ’Visions: A Roundtable Talk,” 2006.

Curating *Unstuck in Time*

Pakuranga, at an unconfirmed time in 2014. This was the ambiguous start date given to me in early 2013 for the preliminary roadwork construction of the Reeves Road Flyover, a 20 metre high four-lane wide motorway extension to be built only 5 metres from TT's front entrance. Due to the motorway's proposed location, literally on TT's doorstep, it was expected that the initial works would limit public access to the organisation.¹⁷ Therefore, the challenge was to develop an entire year's exhibition programme that would be offsite.

Unstuck in Time (UT) was conceived to be one of those exhibitions – an exhibition responsive to the impending uncertainty of urban change while also absorbing the potential disruption to the gallery space as a point of conceptual interest. The main aim of the exhibition was to explore how perceptions of time influence humankind's occupation of the earth and our relationship with each other. The title was inspired by Kurt Vonnegut's seminal 1969 sci-fi novel *Slaughterhouse Five* – a satire set in World War II reflecting on the tragic absurdity of war.¹⁸ Being 'unstuck in time' allows Vonnegut's time travelling protagonist Billy Pilgrim to become philosophical about his fleeting existence and the folly of humankind. The exhibition borrows Vonnegut's concept by considering what might be gleaned by being critical of 'the time'.

UT was to be created by employing a process-led commissioning methodology, echoing that used in *CE*, resulting in a series of new offsite artworks that would explore the perception of time in relation to the region of Auckland. As an exhibition focusing on the perception of time it became evident to me that the curatorial process would be crucial in allowing the selected artists as much creative freedom as possible while also to establishing a compelling form in relation to the chosen concept.

¹⁷ "TT's Annual Report to Auckland Council."

¹⁸ Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five* (London: Panther Books Limited, 1970).



Artists and TT staff meeting for day one of the *UT* fieldtrip.

Courtesy of TT, Auckland. Photo by Andrew Kennedy

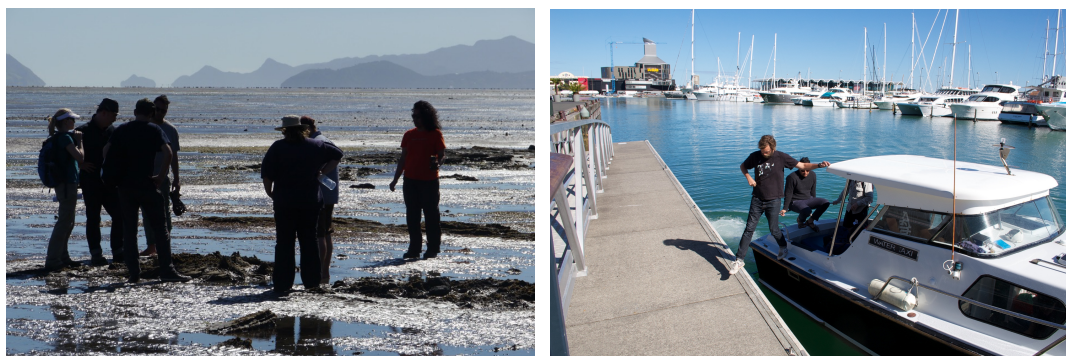
Downtown Auckland, 9 a.m. on Thursday, 30 January 2014. The artists Matthew Cowan, Phil Dadson, Sally J. Morgan, Shannon Te Ao and Layne Waerea joined TT staff to embark on a unique ‘time-travel’ fieldtrip throughout Auckland. This intensive three-day excursion was designed to give the artists the opportunity to simply pause their daily lives and to experience numerous perspectives of local time. The trip required just as much planning and resources as a small exhibition and also involved extensive consultation with various experts and the workshopping of ideas among TT’s staff.

The resulting experiences included undertaking a sensory exercise, forecasting the impact of climate change, exploring ancient fossilised kauri forests, viewing the urban history of Auckland through archived film footage, spending time in a historic bach on Rangitoto Island, watching a little known 1970s sci-fi film produced in Pakuranga, being perplexed by quantum physics, delving into Auckland’s deep time with a leading volcanologist, learning from the tangata whenua of Ihumātao about their rich history and on-going struggle against land confiscation and pollution, and sitting sonically transfixed in a live performance by experimental pianist Chris Abrahams.¹⁹

Throughout the three days, emphasis was placed on creating jarring juxtapositions between the sequences of locations visited. This required transitions and meal breaks as vital periods to enable impromptu group discussion and individual contemplation.

¹⁹ This was a public event held at TT and organised by Vitamin S on Thursday 30 January 2014, 8.00 p.m.

It also included traversing the region on multiple modes of transport such as water taxi, train, car and by foot to subtly explore the history of Auckland.



Left: Day two, *UT* fieldtrip visiting a fossilised Kauri forest in the Manukau harbour. Photo by Andrew Kennedy

Right: Day three, *UT* fieldtrip returning from Rangitoto Island. Photo by Bruce E. Phillips.

Courtesy of TT, Auckland.

One of the great challenges with this outing was to create a series of experiences that would truly disrupt the artists from a place that they were more or less familiar with. Most of the artists were based in the city or had lived in Auckland in the past. To ensure that their sense of time and place was suitably unstuck, the sequence of events was crafted as a collaborative effort by the TT team so that genuine surprise was created or involved visiting locations and talking to people that the artists would not have had the prior inclination or invitation.

During these visits, staff preserved a sense of mystery by not revealing the programme to the artists. While this ‘mystery’ was admittedly one of the more cliché aspects of the project it did prove useful in injecting some light humour and required the artists to relax, relinquish their expectations and have confidence in others to direct their movements. Key to this was the compulsory confiscation of their cell phones so that they would be fully committed to being present in the programme and attentive to the group.

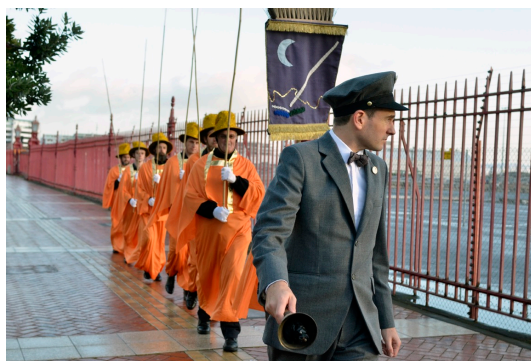
The group dynamic was also considered at length. These artists were selected by me after feedback from and discussions with TT staff. The final decision being made not only for the strength of their past work and the relevance of their practice to the exhibition concept but also for what they might contribute within a group situation. Chuck and I had learnt this lesson in *CE* – that through careful selection of individuals

communion is achieved, group identity can be formed and a familial bond established that provides the basis for vibrant discussion, empathetic listening and learning.

After lengthy goodbyes, the artists were then turned loose for six months and asked to propose a project that would be produced in collaboration with TT. From a curatorial perspective, the development of these projects was governed by just a few guiding principles:

1. That the artists were not required to use the fieldtrip as a starting point for their work.
2. All ideas would be considered, ideal outcomes would be strived towards with a sincere philosophy of saying yes more than no, and taking the artist's lead in all possible instances.
3. Ideally the projects would land within the three-month exhibition period but more importantly each project would be allowed the opportunity to develop in its own timeframe.

This approach was designed with the aim of creating a process that attempted to ignite artistic research through the gift of experience and also to relinquish curatorial agency so that the artists would gain more autonomy. It was hoped that through engaging in this process the artists might be inspired to create new bodies of work. Or to propose ambitious projects in which TT could use its expertise to help the artists achieve something beyond their individual capacity. The evidence of this is greatly varied throughout all of the five projects that eventuated.



Mathew Cowan, *The terminalia of funny-land*, 2014 (production stills). Photos by John Cowan. Commissioned by Te Tuhi.



Sally J. Morgan, *How long have I been here?*, 2014

interactive performance project, 5000-litre water tank, fish (wrasse), aquaculture system, movable platform, fishing and cooking equipment. Performances by Sally J. Morgan occurred at TT on Saturday, 2 August, 2 p.m. and Saturday, 6 September, 2 p.m., 2014. Photos by Sam Hartnett. Commissioned by Te Tuhi, Auckland.

Mathew Cowan and Sally J. Morgan developed works that were a direct result of the fieldtrip and which have expanded their practice through ambition and scope.

Cowan's work *The terminalia of funny-land* (2014) was inspired by a segment of historic film footage of Lunar Park, a now non-existent 1920s fairground attraction, that the group viewed during our scheduled visit to Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision, Auckland. In this project TT staff became a small film unit, producing a 16 mm film involving eight performers at seven locations along the Auckland city waterfront.

Similarly, Morgan's interactive performance project *How long have I been here?* (2014) proved to benefit from the curatorial process by referencing the opportunity we took to pause and fish while on Rangitoto Island. This led Morgan to consider the environmental issues of commercial fishing on finite fish stocks and how this consumer experience separates eating from the responsibility of killing. The work consisted of a 5,000 litre saltwater fish tank and aquaculture system from which Morgan caught fish as scheduled performances. In the performance, she barbed a hook in her arm and then proceeded to fish with another hook joined to the same line. She also invited the public to try their luck with the condition that all fish caught had

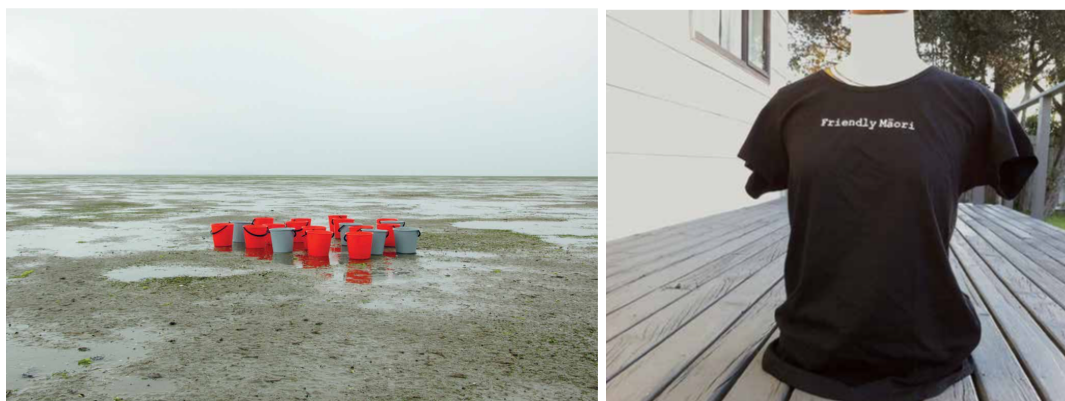
to be killed, cooked and eaten onsite. As with Cowan's project, TT worked closely with Morgan by providing production expertise to realise this technically challenging work.

In the other three projects, the influence of the fieldtrip is not as clearly evident. While being closely related to the concept of the exhibition, the artworks created by Phil Dadson, Layne Waerea and Shannon Te Ao benefited more from the opportunity the artists had to develop their established bodies of practice. Dadson's multi-media installation *Compass of Frailty* (2014) was a poetic meditation on the susceptibility of the environment to be affected by human activity. He explored this by evoking aspects of time, place and the ephemeral through an assemblage of elements incorporating sonically rich video footage shot on and around Rangitoto Island. The interest in Rangitoto has a correlation with the fieldtrip, however, the work remains characteristically situated within his vast oeuvre. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain if the curatorial process contributed anything more than just an opportunity to create a new work using a subject already familiar to the artist.



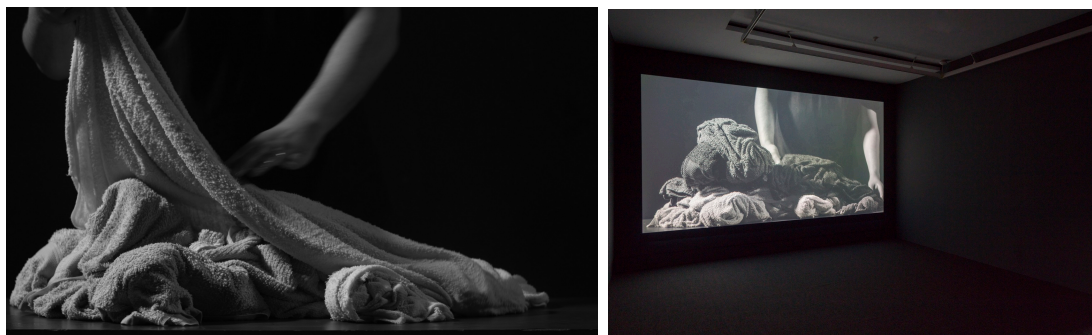
Left: Installation view. Right: Video still. Phil Dadson, *Compass of Frailty*, 2014

3 channel HD video, 9:20 min looped, purpose-built steel frame, chair and paddle, road cones and barriers, sandbags, shells, beer can tabs, chalk-drawn circle with scribed compass points, painted kayak, water and camellia flowers replaced weekly
Commissioned by Te Tuhi, Auckland.



Layne Waerea, *Fair Weather*, 2014. fairweatherblog.com

free access to air, water and black humour. Photos by Layne Waerea. Commissioned by Te Tuhi, Auckland.



Right: Video still. Left: Installation view, photo by Sam Hartnett. Shannon Te Ao, *A torch and a light (cover)*, 2015. HD video and sound, 7:33 min looped cinematography by Iain Frengley. Featuring text from 'He waiata aroha' (A song of love), author unknown, trans. Heni Turei and Matoroa Ngarimu. Commissioned by TT, Auckland.

Layne Waerea's durational *Fair Weather* (2014) project involved a blog and a series of free services that were provided at various times and locations across Auckland, running throughout and beyond the exhibition period. *Fair Weather* develops on from a series of short-term projects that Waerea had experimented with previously. The only perceivable influence that the curatorial process had in this instance was the opportunity for Waerea to take advantage of the flexible timeframe. That said, there was like-minded correlation with *UT*'s driving concepts and some synergies to Ihumātao's struggle against a history of water pollution and land confiscation.

Shannon Te Ao benefited from the flexible timeframe as a number of other life commitments delayed the development of his work. Te Ao chose to use this adaptable opportunity to extend an existing collaboration with cinematographer Iain Frengley in response to a disused industrial building in Auckland. His work *A torch and a light (cover)* was exhibited in 2015 and coincided with the *UT* (printed edition) book launch. In this work the words of a pre-colonial waiata are spoken in an industrial space followed by a quizzical scene of a figure manipulating a mound of soggy towels that resemble mountainous terrains or bodily forms. This lyrical and ambiguous content suggests a longing for some fond presence now made intangible and perhaps some desire to seek it through the physical.



Installation views of *UT* exhibition. Photos by Sam Hartnett. Courtesy of TT, Auckland.



Installation views of *UT* exhibition. Photos by Sam Hartnett. Courtesy of TT, Auckland.

Pakuranga, Wednesday, 14 August 2013. Auckland Transport announced that the initial work on the Reeves Road Flyover would be deferred until mid-2015.²⁰ As a result, I was committed to facilitate five new commissions and also activate TT's gallery spaces for *UT*. This retreat back to the gallery is one example of how a process-led project can be easily compromised by external factors.

In saying so, change is an everyday factor for small organisations such as TT and within such contexts it is necessary to figure out how limitations can become strengths. The challenge at hand was not necessarily a compromise but rather an opportunity of re-contextualisation. In response, I shifted tack to place emphasis away from only one format to concentrate on three. This included the process-led commissions, a group show and also a publication project.

The group show comprised entirely of existing works and was used to refine my curatorial statement that I had previously used only to share my conceptual interests and intentions with the participating artists. The group exhibition profiled the work of

²⁰ Auckland Transport, "South-Eastern Busway to Open Sooner," February 12, 2015, <https://at.govt.nz/about-us/news-events/southeastern-busway-to-open-sooner/>.

seven artists The Otolith Group, Tehching Hsieh, Toril Johannessen, Martin Awa Clarke Langdon, Darcy Lange, Kerry Ann Lee, Duane Linklater, Nicolas Kozakis & Raoul Vaneigem, and Torben Tilly & Robin Watkins (selected by Andrew Kennedy, TT's Assistant Curator). The work of these artists was chosen to illustrate three subthemes of my curatorial enquiry: the creation of mechanised time, the evidence of deep time, and the experience of time as duration. The concept was developed to emphasise that 'time' is a fundamental aspect that shapes the way we have lived since the exponential acceleration of industrialisation and the growth of global capitalism.

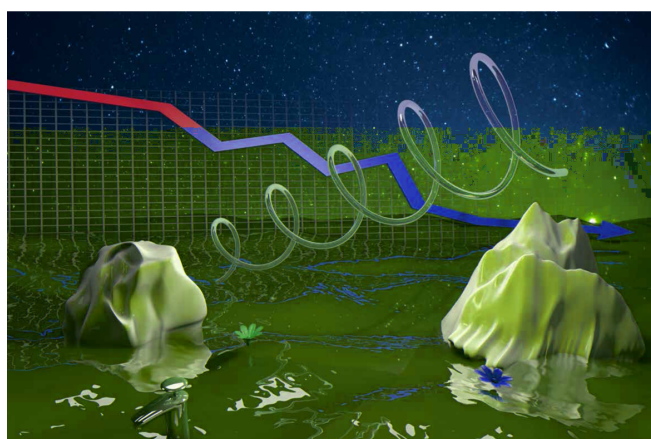
It was far from my original plan to revert to a more traditional mode of exhibition making, where the curator uses artworks to illustrate his or her own thesis. However, I did find that this conventional aspect could be used as a mechanism to satisfy institutional requirements while allowing the more unpredictable new works the opportunity to be created without any additional constraints. I believe this permitted experimentation to occur within flexible timeframes and also, as the curator Elena Filipovic has highlighted, to allow the possibility for the artists to "transcend or even defy their thematic or structural exhibition frames".²¹

The publication project was important as a communicative tool to engage with audiences over a much longer duration.²² It was divided into three volumes entitled *After*, *Accompaniment* and *Before* that were created as free downloadable ebooks and a limited edition printed publication for sale. By choosing this approach the publication project was also an attempt to resist the taxonomic and presumptive function of the conventional exhibition catalogue. While in many ways the publication functions just like any other exhibition collateral, there was a concerted effort to develop a self-aware document that performs the exhibition in an expanded form.

Before supports a narrative that supplements elements of the group show and subtly acts to link specific artworks to a broader enquiry about artistic production and its role within society. In *After*, additional contributions were sought by writers to expand, question and share recollections of individual artworks so that the exhibition might fold in on itself and become a hybrid between record and autonomous article.

²¹ Filipovic, "What Is an Exhibition?" 67.

²² Bruce E. Phillips et al., *UT*, ed. Rebecca Lal (Auckland, N.Z.: TT, 2015).



Left: Sorawit Songsataya, *Te Mārama*, 2014. Right: Kate Woods, *Sisak*, 2014. Commissioned by TT, Auckland.

Very different to the other two volumes, *Accompaniment* unsettles the tidy thematic of the show by inviting artists Simon Morris, Sorawit Songsataya, Kate Woods and Lightreading to produce page-works that tap into lateral concepts beyond the curatorial impetus. These artists were given very little constraints other than formatting guidelines and much less curatorial consultation. Some of the works exist in different formats within the digital and printed copies therefore allowing an artist's contribution to change and grow within the context rather than being regimented within one media.

Taipei, 12:13 p.m. on Thursday, 12 February 2015. I receive a message on my phone from home, sharing a public announcement made by Auckland Transport. The press

release states that the Reeves Road Flyover has been “deferred for a decade” in favour of improving the bus system first.²³ Typical, I think. It seems that waiting for a motorway to occur is a bit like waiting for Godot. As in Samuel Beckett’s seminal play, talk about its arrival *and* the reality of its arrival seems to be trapped within a time-warp. Not that I am complaining. Some urban planning advocates point out that improved public transport as opposed to building more roads is key for Auckland’s congestion issues and perhaps it may decrease our dependence on cars.²⁴

It is frustrating having to programme around greater forces such as this. Yet I have learnt that this is just one complication that curating entails. For in reality exhibitions are uncertain entities despite how tidily curators and organisations might present them – uncertain because they are never really only the selections and groupings of artworks. Exhibitions are the performance of their making: the endless threads of emails, the countless meetings, the hours of reading, thinking, and doing. Exhibitions are also plastic things that by necessity must change and evolve. Curators are constantly negotiating key concepts and a show’s form with colleagues, artists and audiences. Curators must also absorb or deflect compromise from social, institutional and political pressures and I would now add the mechanisms of urban change that appear to be a conglomerate of the three.

The form of an exhibition is assembled by the process of its making and the philosophical mode through which curators practice. When we do not observe these spatiotemporal and socio-political components we actively deny the existence of duration, compromise, bias, failure and all other issues that might make ‘grubby’ or untidy the otherwise ideologically ‘clean’ curated manifestations. In Chapter Four I scrutinise these grubby areas to reveal the compromises and contradictions of curatorial methodology. Here I utilise the cross case analysis referred to earlier in the methodology to seek out patterns of practice throughout all of the case studies.

²³ Auckland Transport, “South-Eastern Busway to Open Sooner.”

²⁴ “Reeves Rd Flyover Dies,” *TransportBlog*, February 13, 2015, <http://transportblog.co.nz/2015/02/13/reeves-rd-flyover-dies/>.

Chapter Four: Towards a curatorial continuum

What is at stake is an ethics of curating, a responsibility toward the very methodology that constitutes practice.¹

— Elena Filipovic

In the introduction, I framed my enquiry with Maria Lind's assertion that there is a difference between curating and the curatorial. Lind presents us with two opposing practices, each which have distinctly different methodological principles: *curating* which is the conventional practice of "business as usual" that has little critical awareness or inclination to change entrenched processes; and *the curatorial* which is said to be an approach that "goes beyond curating . . . in order to challenge the status quo".²

However, after considering my own exhibition case studies presented in the previous chapters, it has become apparent to me that this division of curating and the curatorial is not necessarily as clear-cut as articulated by Lind. It seems that unintended slippages between these distinct approaches occur to varying degrees, suggesting that there is a *spectrum* of methodologies rather than a strict *binary* of opposing ideologies at play. And, if there is indeed such a methodological spectrum, then there must be some force that causes fluctuations within its scales.

In this chapter, I provide a cross case analysis of the exhibition case studies. I argue that it is *motivation* that causes practice to fluctuate within a methodological spectrum. To begin, I explore evidence which supports the idea of a methodological spectrum using examples from each of the previous chapters. I then switch to consider motivation as a type of gravitational force causing practice to fluctuate. In this section, I draw on the cognitive theory of motivation to deconstruct conventional thinking about the ways in which motivation might manifest within curatorial practice. To conclude, I then explore the relationship between methodology and motivation to examine the potential of a 'curatorial continuum' that operates in productive tension *in between* curating and the curatorial.

¹ Filipovic, "What Is an Exhibition?," 67.

² Lind, "To Show or Not to Show."

Evidence of a Spectrum

My method is more like tacking, as one might with sailing.³

— James Clifford

The previous chapters illustrate a range of different examples of how a methodological focus shifts throughout the creation of an exhibition. This is despite the fact that the exhibitions examined in Chapters One and Two seem to adhere clearly to conventional modes of exhibition making, with the examples in Chapter Three reflecting a practice that is ideologically aligned to the curatorial turn. In this section, I explore the idea that despite the ‘form’ that an exhibition might appear to take, the actual process is less defined and more emergent with deliberate, accidental and instinctive slippages between ideological modes of practice within a methodological spectrum.

Methodological Spectrum in Chapter One

Let us consider the two examples of group exhibitions in Chapter One. In the exhibition *WDYMW?* the predominant methodology is of a typical curator-centric process that follows the formula of a master concept from which the curator selects artworks. This is consistent apart from a significant window of opportunity provided to the artist Kalisolaite ‘Uhila to create a new work.

The opportunity created for ‘Uhila signals a slight shift from a conventional group show to become slightly more in line with the curatorial. By inviting ‘Uhila an opportunity was given to disrupt curatorial autonomy and welcome unpredictability. This is clearly apparent in the detailed account given of ‘Uhila’s work *Mo’ui Tukuhausia* (2012) in which an evolving artwork unfolded that had unexpected public involvement and curatorial implications.

In the second exhibition, *BM&T*, this melding of the typical group exhibition and the more emergent product of a curatorial methodology has developed into a strategic approach. This show is essentially a commissioning opportunity masquerading as a conventional group show. The exhibition was less centred on the curator’s thesis and more centred on enabling the creation of a single work by artist Luke Willis Thompson *and* for the work to be situated within a particular mode of artistic practice.

³ Clifford, *On the Edges of Anthropology: Interviews*.

Of course, it is the curator that has ultimately made a selection of artists based upon very particular conceptual framing and theoretical argument. However, it seems that this grouping is more in service of one artist's work than the curator's thematic.

Methodological Spectrum in Chapter Two

Similarly in Chapter Two the solo exhibition examples first appear to be conventional exhibitions. However, in Santiago Sierra's exhibition we witness a twist of creative agency. Rather than the curator inviting the artist it is the artist who has invited the curator. Due to the nature of this invitation new requirements are expected of the curator that exceed conventional curating.

Firstly, the curator is required to become embedded within the artist's practice so that a relevant creative contribution can be made that the artist will approve. In this instance, the curator is required to give up the role of the caretaker and instead function more like the artist's trusted assistant and thereby become the hand of the artist by proxy. Winning the trust of the artist demands that an in-depth knowledge of their practice so that the right decisions can be made. This is also a more involved process than that of facilitation, which suggests an automated role of guiding the artist along in a way that is creatively hands off.

Secondly, the curator is required to be a multi-skilled practitioner who can collaborate with others, project manage and function as a creative director. In this particular example it was not the work of one solitary curator as creative auteur but rather a curatorial team that collectively worked through various creative approaches and employed methods to achieve the final result. This process involved group brainstorming, experimentation, concept development, proposals and continual communication with the artist, further development and technical troubleshooting, the employment of outsourced expert labour and community consultation in order to produce the final result.

Throughout this process, there were many big and small decisions made that far exceeded the creative domain of conventional curating in regards to the solo exhibitions. The more subtle decisions could be as simple as choosing the camera angle and the choreography of the destruction.

For the most part it is clear that this shift from perfunctory curating to more progressive curatorial approaches is due to the artist's invitation. After all it was the artist that had given permission and, more accurately, issued instruction for curating to become a creative act rather than mere facilitation. The challenge also required an awareness to shift from traditional curating to the curatorial in order to achieve the best result. Failure to recognise the need for a methodological shift would have resulted in the invitation being retracted or in a much more substandard result.

Lind's assertion that the curatorial requires an in-depth understanding of context is also applicable here.⁴ For it was Sierra's purpose of the artwork to gain a greater relevance to specific locations around the world via outsourcing the creative production. Under this mandate, the TT team and I were given the opportunity to make a substantial contribution in terms of research and project production.

With William Pope.L's exhibition there are some similar muddled methodological traits in what should have been a straightforward solo exhibition. In many ways the curator's role in this instance appears to be mainly facilitation but there are clearly examples of other more creative contributions. Such contributions included research assistance in helping the artist to understand New Zealand's colonial context and other tasks that required the curator to become an assistant who is deeply attuned with the artist's practice.

These responsibilities also required assembling a local crew of professionals that would be sympathetic to the artist's goals and would be able to change tack at the drop of a hat and take on different jobs. As the curator, I was also required to be adaptable. I would take on tasks such as being a temporary lighting desk operator, set builder or prop maker. Such duties go beyond standard curating by demanding an agile creative thinking process that mirrors the artist's.

Within these two solo shows a requirement is made of the curator to shift almost entirely away from a conventional methodology to an adaptive one that is stable in terms of standard institutional practice but embraces lateral thinking. For a solo show to be successful it is imperative that the curator's decision-making is wedded to the artist's thought process. This provides a unique opportunity for a curator to be aligned

⁴ Lind, "Active Cultures: Maria Lind on the Curatorial."

with an artist's practice. At best this opportunity should enable the curator to channel institutional resources in inventive ways to benefit the artist and public.

Methodological Spectrum in Chapter Three

Moving into Chapter Three there is a distinct claim articulated that a curator's methodology should resolve itself in a radically new process of engagement with artists and also eventuate in a visibly different exhibition form. Thus the two exhibitions discussed are clearly aligned with the ideology of the curatorial turn. For example, the *CE* project is initiated by a clearly stated curatorial mandate to kick-start the curators' and artists' research through a series of shared experiences. This process clearly demonstrates a decisive outreach to connect artists with communities and to gift the artists with inspiring experiences.

Throughout this process, unexpected demands occurred at an organisational level. This is most clearly evident when mediation was required between all parties around the activation of *Ruatepūpuke II*. The process also proved to issue certain challenges to artists, the curators and the gallery to facilitate the artists' projects. It seems that through a radical revision of process, convention was to a great degree dispensed with and new methods were developed in order to achieve an experimental result.

Through this approach I also strived to achieve a horizontal plane of agency so that artists could make certain requirements of the curators and the art gallery – an aspect clearly evident in the works by artists Maddie Leach and Tania Bruguera. Both of these projects illustrate various moments where institutional practices were challenged. These artist-requested manipulations of conventional practice also translated into unique visitor experiences and the creation of challenging new artworks that have subsequently become influential within some of the artists' careers.

Therefore, in *CE* it seems there was little ideological compromise to the curatorial approach apart from negotiating different agendas amongst all parties involved. Possible reasons for the minimal amount of methodological adaptation could be due to the security of funding or the dedication of the Hyde Park Art Center to maintain the project's integrity. Collaborating with the director of an institution most certainly has its advantages. As director, Chuck Thurow had the authority to make sure the

project maintained its ground and was not dictated to by internal or external forces within his control.

In *UT*, I attempted to replicate the process and philosophy of *CE*. However, while achieving some similar results *UT* became a much more methodically hybridised exhibition. The ideological shift in this exhibition is attributed to change outside of my control, namely a motorway project and TT's mandate to have something on view within the gallery spaces. In my case study I describe this as a 'retreat back into the gallery' as if the change is a reluctant but necessary safety mechanism to make sure that the gallery's function is preserved – as if to sail home before the weather changes.

However, perhaps this retreat should also be considered an ideological defeat because in actuality I did not abandon the process-led commissioning but rather took on additional elements to make certain the artists' autonomy was maintained. What might be judged an ideological compromise is essentially a strategic shift from, first, the curatorial, to conventional curating, to the curatorial again, and then one final shift that found the project resting somewhere in between both modes.

To use James Clifford's sailing metaphor, this process could also be viewed as an act of 'tacking' to maintain a devoted course against an opposite prevailing wind by zigzag manoeuvres moving from one side to the other whilst making incremental gains forward.⁵ Clifford's analogy of tacking is particularly helpful in this instance because it describes deliberate attempts to traverse against the grain of much greater contrary forces. Perhaps therefore, my methodological change was not a retreat but a sidestep towards standard curating in order to tack back once again to the curatorial and to finally arrive at an exhibition that is neither one nor the other but resting somewhere on a scale between both.

Since *UT* was forced to change due to very defined factors it is an interesting example in which to consider the potential benefits operating within a methodological spectrum might provide. It is apparent that the flexibility that occurs is not due to a lack of persistence in sticking to a desired ideology but rather is rationalised as a strategic shift changing as need arose in each specific example. If this is indeed the

⁵ Clifford, *On the Edges of Anthropology: Interviews*. 51.

case then we could surmise that being adaptable within a methodological spectrum is not necessarily a haphazard reaction but rather one that can be strategically emergent.

By this I mean that it is possible to embed planned strategies within curating so that when the wind changes suddenly, due to an extrinsic incentive outside of the curator's control, curators can maintain their course by tacking and thereby guarding the most important aspects of the project at hand. Strategy requires forethought and forethought also requires testing, experimenting and training to, as athletes say, build-up muscle memory – so when the weather changes the curator can to respond *in* the moment almost without thought.

I have so far explored the idea that there is *not* a strict division between curating and the curatorial but rather a spectrum in between these two poles within which methodological modes become hybridised. I have also described how these shifts have been born out of a necessity to change when faced with either an opportunity to innovate or to contend with less than ideal realities. However, while I have discussed how applied practice might exist within a methodological spectrum I have not explained why it occurs in the first place. Throughout this next section, I argue that it is motivation that causes the shift within the methodological spectrum due to intrinsic and extrinsic incentives.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

It is clear that this tacking between the conventional and progressive approaches discussed above is not the desired implementation of either curating or the curatorial methodologies. The very idea of forming a methodology is that it will not abide becoming associated with its antithesis. This of course would lead to a contradiction, which is why Lind labours over a defined polarity between curating and the curatorial. By their very logic, methodologies must be impervious to contradiction and it is imperative that they have an equal opposite if they are to maintain their integrity as cohesive ideologies worthy of following into practice.

Therefore, the decision to break away from one methodology and switch to another must be influenced by something other than methodology itself. I argue that this other force is the most important element in understanding? how and why a curator practises. Yet it is something so very basic that it has been completely overlooked, as

my literature review revealed, as a specific topic within the field of curating. This other force, I believe, is simply motivation.

As discussed in the introduction, intrinsic incentives involve some sort of ideological focus and in curation this incentive may be the theme of an exhibition that has grown from some topic of personal interest to a curator. Intrinsic incentives are clearly evident in my case studies through stated goals to attain some perceived social benefit such as: engaging with a given social context (this is most apparent in *WDYMW?*), contributing to artistic practice (apparent in works by Sierra, Pope.L, 'Uhila, Thompson, Leach, Bruguera and by most artists in *UT*) and challenging conventional institutional paradigms (most clearly apparent in *CE*).

In contrast, external incentives are agendas that seep in from environmental sources either beyond the curator's control or external rewards actively pursued by the curator. These extrinsic incentives could be the desire to gain reputation by working with renowned artists (evident with Sierra and Pope.L), institutional requirements (evident in *CE* and *UT*), and pressure from political sources (evident in *UT*). Such external motivations can improve or compromise a curator's intrinsic incentives and as illustrated in my case studies may require a shift in practice.

However, it is apparent that not all extrinsic motivations are detrimental especially in situations where external reward can be used to encourage taking on certain responsibilities that might not be greatly interesting to perform. Such beneficial extrinsic encouragement could include considering the risk a certain exhibition might have upon the longevity of an organisation by taking into account key targets or political factors (as evident in *UT*).

Located in between two spectrums is a continuum

It should now be apparent that the push and pull between intrinsic and extrinsic incentives is likely to be a key force for the shift of practice within a methodological spectrum. Motivation seems to act like a type of gravitational force causing methodology to become pliant, not unlike the means by which the mass of celestial bodies causes light to curve in space-time.

In this section, I further explore the affect that motivation has upon methodology and how this relationship might allow for new forms of practice to be identified and intentionally sought after. In beginning, I demonstrate that all practice can be located within the two intersecting spectrums of methodology and motivation. By charting each of my case studies within these spectrums I provide insight into how the relations of methodology and motivation produce new understandings of curatorial practice as a ‘curatorial continuum’ – a mode of practice that strategically and self-reflexively seeks forward momentum by tacking in between methodological and motivational resistances.

Methodology and motivation: two intersecting spectrums

The nexus of methodology and motivation can be explained as a defined point within two intersecting spectrums in which a range of cohesive, dissonant and hybridised practices can be located. This can be mapped out in two different axes (as illustrated in Figure 1) where we have one axis illustrating the motivation spectrum between the intrinsic and extrinsic incentives *and* on the perpendicular axis we have the methodology spectrum between curating and the curatorial. Within this matrix we can locate all exhibitions held in tension between methodology and motivation.

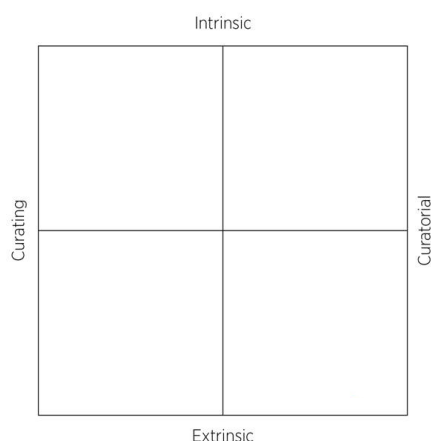


Fig. 1

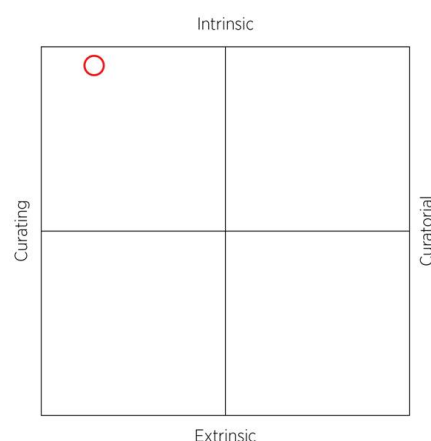


Fig.2

To take the two group exhibitions in Chapter One as an example. For *WDYMW?* the concept of the show grew out of an intrinsic incentive – namely that I was incensed by issues of racism within the socio-political context of the Howick Ward and wanted to address these concerns. By recognising that many artists around the world share a similar motivation it seemed appropriate to curate a group show that compared and

contrasted their various practices. It also seemed appropriate to choose a conventional methodology to implement this intrinsic incentive in order to draw together artworks with the sole purpose of illustrating my thesis.

During the research I then realised that there were no existing examples of practice that addressed issues local to Pakuranga. Presented with this problem I shifted tack to a curatorial approach that focused upon relinquishing curatorial autonomy to enable the artist Kalisolaite 'Uhila to create something new. This is a crucial point in which a decisive methodological shift occurs in order to serve a burning intrinsic incentive. Therefore, it is possible to locate *WDYMW?* in a zone that is close to the intrinsic and gravitating slightly away from standard curating (as illustrated in Figure 2).

BM&T, can also be represented by Figure 2 as it followed a similar trajectory if not more strategically so. In this exhibition, the decision to curate a standard group show to complement Luke Willis Thompson's work is apparent. While conventional curating was maintained for two thirds of the exhibition, the show gets marginally pulled in a curatorial direction. This is because the commissioning of Thompson's work required significant thought and action in a curatorial capacity as I maintained a mainly intrinsic incentive.

In contrast, we can see a distinct difference in both solo exhibitions mentioned in Chapter Two. Both Santiago Sierra's and William Pope.L's exhibitions grew out of mostly an extrinsic desire to work with these seminal figures. This is an extrinsic incentive because the incentive is clearly for the curator and organisation to claim the pulling power of attracting internationally respected artists.

However, the exhibitions are also driven by an intrinsic incentive because there is a stated ideological desire to highlight socio-political issues and to use the artists profile to encourage similar forms of artistic practice on a local level. Characteristically, both exhibitions should have followed a conventional mode of curating but due to the needs of the artists the projects required a more adaptable curatorial methodology to be employed. By considering this mixture of methodologies and motivations it is possible to locate both Sierra's and Pope.L's exhibitions mostly towards the curatorial and extrinsic axes and only slightly swayed by the intrinsic and conventional curating (see Figure 3).

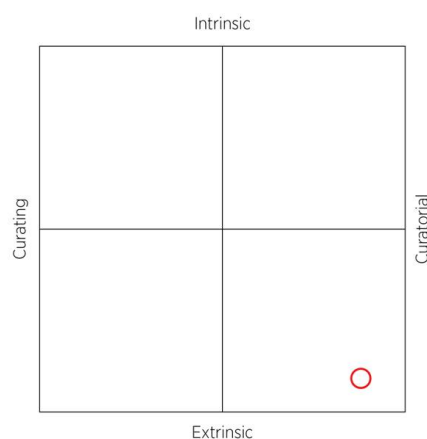


Fig. 3

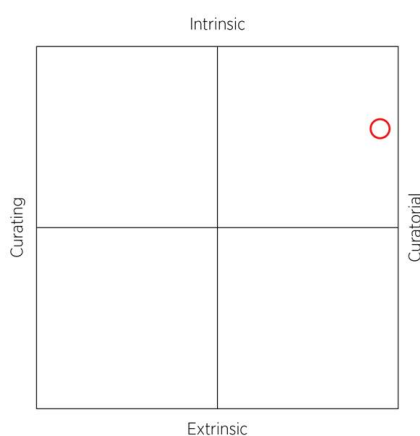


Fig. 4

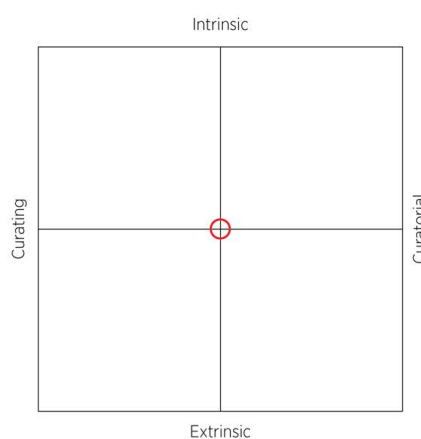


Fig. 5

In Chapter Three, we can map even more points within the methodology and motivation spectrums. *CE* is a prime example of the intrinsic and curatorial intersection. This co-curated venture began with an intrinsic incentivised epiphany about how to collaborate with clearly achieved goals of broadening institutional practices and giving artists agency to create work on different timeframes.

However, *CE* also had moments of extrinsic challenge with its collaborating partners such as the relationship management with Te Whānau a Ruataupare, the FMoNH and the AIC, between the curators and also between the institution and artists. Despite these extrinsic incentives coming in to play, *CE* maintained a strong course towards the curatorial and intrinsic direction. For this reason, it is possible to clearly place *CE* within the intrinsic and curatorial with only a slight pull towards the extrinsic (represented in Figure 4).

UT was also originally destined to be located in a similar point in the spectrum. However, this aspiration was derailed when the motorway development was postponed. In this situation, I could have maintained a hard-line sticking to the original methodology. However, if I had done so the organisation would have been compromised with the possibility of not having gallery spaces utilised. This resulted in equally accommodating both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives plus curating and curatorial methodologies which locates *UT* directly in between both axes (represented in Figure 5).

The Curatorial Continuum

As illustrated, all of the exhibitions reside somewhere in between spectrums of methodology and motivation. The implication of this realisation is that while a curator might claim to exercise certain methodologies or motivations it is unlikely that they are implemented without blemish within actual practice. Much closer to the truth is that exhibitions and their making most likely reside somewhere in between modes of methodology and motivation, meaning that practice is much more complicated than the kinds of approaches discussed within the literature.

I could end this enquiry here by concluding that locating practice is all that is needed. However, by merely locating practice we only gain a static representation of something that is fluid and ever changing. It is also important that we move away from mere descriptions to understand how new formalisations might be sought after. Forms of practice that show a distinct difference between ‘transparently’ declaring a compromising influence and making steps to out manoeuvre it. Forms of practice that are strategic and innovative when under great pressure from external forces. And, forms of practice that are responsibly conservative when needed but also cunningly experimental.

Since the spectrum is clearly vast with possibilities, it is logical to expect that a new philosophy of practice might be achieved. We could call this new approach the ‘curatorial continuum’ because it strategically tacks between resistances to become unburdened by the curatorial turn and any other attempts to create methodologies that are meant to be a successor of a past approaches.

The notion of the curatorial continuum is attractive to me because it is essentially an empowering concept. Such a continuum essentially resists the ‘arms race’ of championing one methodology over another by embracing diversity and evolution in all directions. Furthermore, rather than just one continuum it might be a continuum in the plural –allowing many ways of practicing by means of tacking in between methodological and motivational resistances.

Agency + Taste = The power of selection

Fig. 6

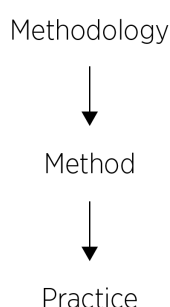


Fig.7

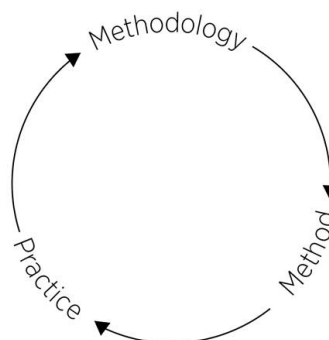


Fig.8

To articulate this in another way, imagine that the profession of curating is practised in various dimensions similar to how our perception of the world is made up of the four dimensions. Operating in the first dimension would be someone assuming the role of curator but not understanding the history of the profession or the fact of it being immersed in a discourse. This is illustrated in Figure 6, the idea that curating is simply having agency to exert one’s taste through selection. This view of curating is currently prevalent in pop culture.⁶ The one dimensional curator is a filter for the glut of information and consumer goods of our age.⁷

Operating in two dimensions would be the awareness that there is a process to curating and that there are a number of methodologies and methods that can constitute practice. This can be represented by Lind’s notions of curating and the curatorial – curating being a linear or a waterfall process (Figure 7) and the curatorial being cyclical (Figure 8).

⁶ Balzer, *Curationism: How Curating Took Over the Art World and Everything Else*.

⁷ Ibid.; Obrist, *Ways of Curating*.

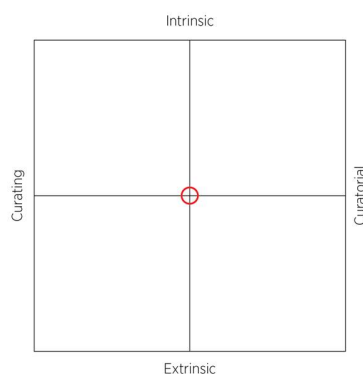


Fig. 9

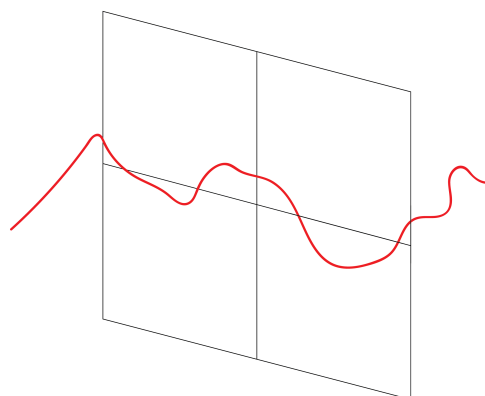


Fig. 10

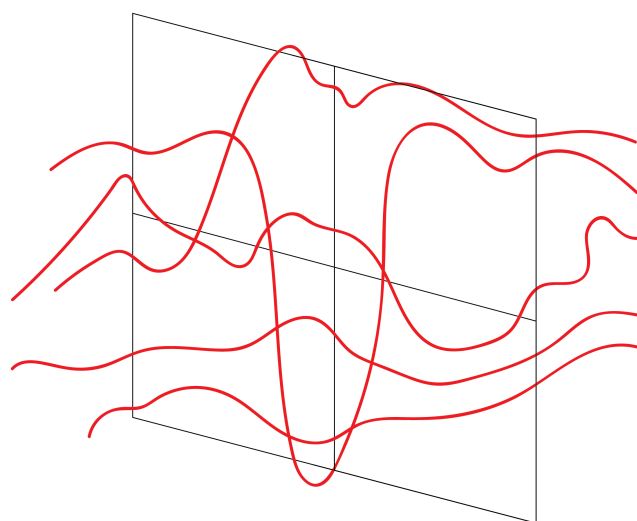


Fig. 11

The third dimension (Figure 9) is a perspective that methodology is affected by motivation, which locates practice within a spectrum rather than the product of strict ideological conditions. The idea of a continuum, therefore, might enable us to consider practice in a fourth dimension a way to strategically utilise a point in the spectrum to evolve hybridised forms of practice. This is illustrated in Figure 10 with a line charting the emergent topographies created by tacking between the resistances of methodology and motivation. By mapping the terrain of practice a curator could strategically replicate the most effective moments that have unfolded or conceivably consider other possibilities within the spectrum. Since there are many locations in the spectrum there must also be many continuums creating a complex landscape (represented in Figure 11). Put simply, the curatorial continuum is a philosophy that takes into account a spectrum of practice and intentionally formulates new ways to adaptively evolve.

To be clear, what I am describing is not to be compared to a synthesis of an opposing thesis and antithesis. It is not a dialectic in which the median position solves the problem of a binary system. Neither is it a continuity, which would imply that practice stays consistent through time. Rather, it is a continuum, which by its very definition is a continuous sequence in which the neighbouring paths are not entirely distinct from each other but the extremes of the spectrum are quite distinct. Searching for such a continuum is important because by nature of being an emergent topography it resists becoming a methodology that is impossible to truly attain because of the various motivations that belie its ideological cause.

My insistence on a curatorial continuum is due to the fundamental problem within the current field of curating that is particularly symptomatic of the curatorial turn. The results of such a problem have been indicated by others such as Paul O'Neill who reminds us that "issues of celebrity, economic advantages . . . career advancement for artist friends, and the influence of the art market on curatorial decisions" are just some of the extrinsic incentives that are not made transparent.⁸ Yes, curators claiming to have achieved seemingly unobtainable 'curatorial' virtues all too often veil these extrinsic influences.

In this sense, we are confronted with a double bind that while curators claim to be exercising new innovative approaches it is inevitable that the proliferation of empty rhetoric will occur. For all curators are subject to conscious or unconscious forms of extrinsic motivation. As Adriano Pedrosa claims, the curator "is always revealed through his or her practice – [and] that these activities are somehow . . . unavoidably contaminated."⁹ After all, "curatorial practice has nothing to do with democracy"¹⁰ because it is essentially a practice of exclusion through selection and the creation of contexts that shut out many voices to focus on just one.

It seems that there is no way of truly creating a methodology that will avoid these issues of unobtainable methodologies intermingled with undeclared motivations. These are hardwired into curating just as contradiction, compromise, deception, bias and inequality are part of being human. Therefore, the question is not how to make

⁸ O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, 93.

⁹ Adriano Pedrosa, "What Is the Process?," in *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating*, ed. Jens Hoffmann (Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2013), 115.

¹⁰ O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse," 127.

yet another methodology that surpasses all others, like the frenzy to create new approaches which we saw during the curatorial turn.¹¹ The question is, rather, how might something like a curatorial continuum *enable* curators to navigate the inevitability of such fundamental flaws within the profession and thereby reduce their affect upon artists and the public?

In confronting a similar argument, the philosopher Alain Badiou surmises that all formalisations are built upon the premise of desiring something impossible, and therefore just because something is deemed impossible does not eliminate it as a beneficial pursuit. In this instance, Badiou considers the common assertion that it is impossible to achieve equality within a capitalist economy, a formalisation created in the pursuit of profit at the expense of others. He contends that the pursuit of profit and its antithesis, the pursuit of equality, are both comparable impossibilities. This is because all formalisations are simplistic abstractions created to attain the knowledge of true reality, which Badiou describes as being an impossible pursuit akin to grasping infinity. According to Badiou, then, the solution to this problem is not in the utopian dream of attaining the infinite but instead the desire to create new possibilities – a desire which requires the creation of new formalisations.¹²

The curatorial continuum which I have developed through this research is one such new formalisation because it continually negotiates and challenges its own structural form so that new possibilities might emerge. It is a mode of working that requires constant navigation in between the latitude of methodology and the longitude of motivation to create self-reflexive possibilities from which new forms of emergent and hybridised practice can unfold. This concept is essentially a political framing through which to perceive how and why curators practise. As Jacques Rancière writes:

What really deserves the name politics is the cluster of perceptions and practices that shape this common world. Politics is first of all a way of framing, among sensory data, a specific sphere of experience . . . it is a specific intertwining of ways of being, ways of doing and ways of speaking.¹³

Politics, Rancière claims, is not the grouping of different points of view and not the

¹¹ O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse"; Wilson, "Curatorial Moments and Discursive Turns"; O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*; Smith and Fowle, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*; Kasper König, "06/1997," in *Foci: Interviews with Ten International Curators* (New York: Apex Art, 2001); Jacob et al., *Show Time*; Obrist, *Ways of Curating*.

¹² Badiou, "À La Recherche Du Réel Perdu: In Search of the Lost Real."

¹³ Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, 2011, 152.

forming of community under a cause led by those who are qualified to rule.¹⁴ Rather, politics is the *relationship* between these groups. It is the relational framework upon which the opposition of logics are formed and the very possibility upon which these distinctions are possible.¹⁵ The role of a political framework is not to police these distinctions but “to make the world of its subjects and its operations seen”, thus the “essence of politics is the manifestation of dissensus as the presence of two worlds in one.”¹⁶ It is from this basis that Rancière argues for practice that is “upheld as the unresolved tension between two resistances.”¹⁷

By virtue of emphasising a spectrum where practice can hold an unresolved tension, the curatorial continuum should resist falling into the same trap of creating blind utopias in the form of singular methodologies. When we believe in such ideals, then myth making occurs, creating empty curatorial rhetoric as a cover for dubious practice. Calling upon Roland Barthes’ theories of embellishment within myth creation,¹⁸ O’Neill has argued that such curatorial myth making is evident “as a social and cultural construction that is passed off as natural . . . in which certain relations to power are obscured.”¹⁹ In contrast, the curatorial continuum calls for an emergent understanding of practice that is freed from the pressure to create idealistic myths to describe practice. The curatorial continuum does not require curators to seek out impossible ideologies but rather encourages curators to tack amongst, and remain in tension between, the resistances of methodology and motivation.

If we accept this philosophical reasoning then we are forced to ask: what possibilities do curators want and how can methods be created that will enable these aspirations? This, I have to concede, is the limit of my current investigation. To test this idea of the curatorial continuum will require further research in practice than I have time for in this thesis. It is sufficient to conclude that, even as a concept untested beyond the exhibitions examined in this study, the curatorial continuum has the potential to resist Lind’s dichotomy of curating versus the curatorial and may offer a way to address the ethical blind spots of the curatorial turn. The curatorial continuum is not a methodological solution but an ever-critical mode of practicing that continually negotiates and challenges its own formalisation.

¹⁴ Ibid., 35.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 37.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Roland Barthes, “Myth Today,” in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers, 1972nd ed. (London: Paladin, 1957).

¹⁹ O’Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, 37.

Conclusion: Emergent Possibilities

In the introduction of this thesis, I considered how, since the advent of institutional critique, the discourse surrounding curating has been overly concerned with reforming traditional museological methodologies. This focus has been led by curators such as Maria Lind who claims that there is a significant distinction between curating and the curatorial in order to champion the idea of a curatorial turn – a movement to create alternative approaches to curating.

However, after considering the concerns of practitioners such as Paul O'Neill, it seems that additional agendas influence curators despite the methodological mode through which a curator claims to practise. This led me to consider what motivations influence curators to practise the way they do. Turning to social psychology, I gained a deeper understanding of how intrinsic and extrinsic incentives create motivations and by reflecting upon my own curatorial practice I could see how this analysis of motivation could be of great value to other curators and to the sector.

Therefore, this research set out to explore two related arguments: that the practice of curating is governed by a choice of methodology and that there is a division between curating and the curatorial; and that the practice of curating is influenced by a curator's motivation regardless of the methodology that a curator claims to practise. I found that while there was plenty of anecdotal reference to these dominant issues in the museum and gallery sector, there was no literature that investigated them in terms of applied professional practice. It occurred to me that the sector might be missing out on deeper nuances and more complex insights into how these factors actually pan out within curatorial practice. Therefore, my research aimed to explore the following questions:

1. How do curators practise? And in particular, whether there is any difference between the two methodological modes of curating and the curatorial?
2. Why do curators practise? Specifically, considering to what extent do intrinsic and extrinsic incentives influence the application of a curator's methodology?

To investigate these questions, I chose to focus on the three dominant exhibition forms that were present in my practice and commonly found throughout the sector. Focusing on solo, group and process-led exhibitions enabled me to also compare

exhibition forms that are considered to be part of either curating or the curatorial. If there really is such a division of methodology as stated by Lind then there should be correlating patterns of this separation present by comparing different exhibition forms. In addition, studying the process of making these exhibitions gave me an opportunity to analyse what part motivation has to play in relation to a curator's methodology.

Since the research questions required specific details about curatorial practice it seemed most appropriate to adopt a form of qualitative research. This led me to consider the autoethnography approach to collating field notes and writing in narratives. Autoethnography also aided me in self-reflexively recording and decoding the factors that influenced my decision-making process. The key to this methodology is acknowledging the subjective influence of the researcher and the context they are working within. This approach was ideally suited to the nature of exhibition making because it allowed me to consider all number of relationships and influences, ranging from my own perspectives to relationships with artists and from the importance of the artwork to how an exhibition engaged the public. However, the narrative style of writing did mean that there were many aspects of the exhibition making process that had to be omitted in order to create a logical account. These omissions included recollections of education and event programmes as well as exhibition design, graphic design and comments from artists and visitors. These omissions limit the research to a perspective that is primarily curator centric. This narrative style of research was also limited to my own experience and my own practice and therefore cannot be indicative of the entire profession of curating.

After conducting a cross case analysis of the exhibition case studies it became apparent to me that this division of curating and the curatorial is *not* necessarily as clear-cut as articulated by Lind. It was apparent that unintended slippages between curating and the curatorial occur to varying degrees, suggesting that there is a spectrum of methodology rather than a strict binary of opposing ideologies at play. And, since there is indeed such a methodological spectrum, there must be some force that causes fluctuations within its scales.

I then considered motivation as a type of gravitational force which causes this fluctuation of methodology within a curator's practice. Through Deci and Ryan's cognitive theory of motivation I explored the two distinctions of intrinsic and extrinsic

incentives and how they might manifest within curatorial practice. I found that these two incentives are always present in tandem to influence the creation of an exhibition no matter what methodology is being practised. Most importantly, I discovered that there is a complex interplay between the intrinsic and extrinsic incentives that, like methodology, create a spectrum of motivation.

The revelation that there is a spectrum of methodology and a spectrum of motivation led me to chart the movement of a curator's practice within two axes. I created a diagram that describes curatorial practice, not in terms of distinct modes of working but as a set of variable resistances held in tension between contrary forces. By considering these tensions, through Badiou's philosophy of formalisations and the political, as well as Rancière's theory of the political and of dissensus, it became apparent to me that curators have the potential to create new forms of practice that are strategically emergent.

I have termed this new understanding of practice the *curatorial continuum* because, rather than creating yet another championing methodology, I see this as a philosophical lens through which we might consider innovative possibilities. By considering all practice as a continuum, this disables arguments that seek to place emphasis on methodology alone. Thereby, the curatorial continuum encourages curators to see the strengths in all approaches within a spectrum of practice. It also challenges curators to consider the range of methodical opportunities available, to consider the incentives that influence their decisions, and also to think creatively as to how they might work differently in the future.

In considering the entirety of this research, it is apparent that there are a number of new contributions relevant to the field of museum studies. First, through my detailed consolidation of the relevant literature, I highlighted the complete absence of any comparative analysis to test the difference between conventional curating and methodologies of the curatorial turn since the absorption of such practices into mainstream museums and galleries. I also revealed that there has been no investigation into how motivation influences practice and similarly no exploration of the relationship between methodology and motivation in curating. These issues have had a significant influence on artists, the public and the institutions. Despite their importance, this thesis is the only study I know of that has explored these concerns in

any great detail.

Second, my adoption of auto-ethnography as a self-reflexive qualitative methodology for unlocking hidden aspects of curatorial practice makes a significant contribution to the current literature. Third, the understanding that curatorial practice operates within a spectrum of methodology and motivation is a new contribution to the discourse. This is a nuanced rubric that changes how curatorial practice might be understood and provides an alternative to the black and white fallacy that was fashionable under the curatorial turn.

The fourth and final contribution of my research is the revelation that curating is a practice held in tension between opposing resistances and that it is therefore possible to conceive of curating as a continuum. The idea of the curatorial continuum is a philosophical perspective that enables new theoretical possibilities – possibilities that are not bound by restrictive polarities or by voices clamouring for the next methodological fashion. Rather, seen from the perspective developed through this research, possibilities are seen as being produced within a spectrum allowing countless combinations of methodologies and motivations to be sought.

Instead of being blown around by implicating forces such as political compromise or personal biases, curators can use this perspective of a curatorial continuum to navigate these issues, or to use James Clifford's sailing metaphor, to *tack* against prevailing winds in order to maintain a tension between the resistances of methodology and motivation. In short, the potential of a curatorial continuum is that it asks curators to be transparent, to have an informed understanding of what influences their decisions and to be aware of the endless curatorial possibilities.

In considering the relevant professional applications of this study, I can conclude that there is great potential to further develop these concepts at a theoretical level and much more scope to conduct further research within actual practice. If curating is to continue to exercise substantial agency within museums, galleries and the art world, it is imperative that we understand how and why curators practice. Only then will curators be able to develop their practices so that they are not only serving their own interests or the interests of their institutions but also serving the best interests of art, artists and the public.

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