

Course Code	DD8012/HR2009
Course Title	Contemporary Curating
Pre-requisites	DD1003 or DD1004
No of AUs	3
Sem 1, AY 2022/2023	
Day	: TUESDAY
Time	: 01:30 to 4:30
Venue	: LHS TR+42

Course Instructor: iola Lenzi, PhD, SOH

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Course Aims

This course will introduce you to the basic precepts of contemporary curating. You will learn about the history of exhibitions, compare museum and independent curatorial approaches, and examine contexts/conditions specific to the curating of contemporary art, particularly in Singapore and the Southeast Asia region. This course is a foundation for further studies in curating practice and museum studies.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Identify key issues in contemporary curating.
2. Write a basic exhibition proposal and author exhibition-related texts.
3. Apply exhibition-making concepts and display techniques to a practical curatorial project.
4. Present and discuss proposals, research relating to curating and exhibition-making, and finished projects, in a clear and cohesive manner.
5. Critique peers' and team-member's proposals and exhibition projects in a constructive manner.

Course Content

What's contemporary curating

You will learn about the different types of exhibitions, approaches to curating and the various roles involved in exhibition-making. You will be introduced to different types of spaces, institutional vs independent, white cube, site-specific, etc. There will be discussions of special issues such as conservation, collections management, art commissions.

History of Exhibitions

You learn about how international curating and exhibition practices have changed over the decades, as impacted by trends such as globalization and participatory art practices. Important case studies of contemporary art exhibitions will be highlighted and discussed.

Writing an Exhibition Proposal

You will learn what is a curatorial narrative and how to write a basic exhibition proposal, including concept, budget, and timeline.

Writing about Art in an Exhibition Context

You will learn about various forms of art writing for exhibitions, from artwork labels to catalogue essays. You will be familiarised with the styles and formats through writing exercises.

Curating Practice

You will work in small teams to put up a mini exhibition. You will be introduced to the practical aspects and basic functions of exhibition organising and gallery management through this process.

Class assignments

Assignments include writing and presenting an exhibition proposal, organizing a mini exhibition, and putting together post-event documentation. These will be developed through class exercises, discussions, presentations exercises and peer/instructor feedback sessions.

Assessment (includes both continuous and summative assessment)

Component	ILO Tested	Programme LO	Weighting	Team/
Individual				
Continuous Assessment	1,4	--	40	Individual
Writing an Exhibition Proposal				
Art Writing exercises				
Class presentations				
Practical Project:	2, 3, 4	--	40	Team
Curate a mini exhibition and project documentation				
Continuous Assessment: Participation	5	--	20	Individual

Bibliography (other texts may be assigned)

1. Altshuler, Bruce. *Salon to Biennial*. London; New York: Phaidon, 2008.
2. Altshuler, Bruce. *Biennials and Beyond*. London; New York: Phaidon, 2013.
3. Bennett, Tony. "The Exhibitionary Complex". In *Thinking about Exhibitions*, edited by Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne, 58-80. London; New York: Routledge, 1996.
4. Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso, 2012.
5. Bishop, Claire. "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics". *October*, Vol. 110 (Autumn 2004): 51-79.
6. Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. Dijon, France: Les Presses du Réel, 2002.

7. Ciric, Biljana. *From a History of Exhibitions Towards a Future of Exhibition-Making: China and Southeast Asia*. 2020.
8. Flores, Patrick D. *Past Peripheral: Curation in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: NUS Museum, 2008.
9. Gardner, Anthony and Charles Green. *Biennials, Triennials, and Documenta: The Exhibitions That Created Contemporary Art*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2016.
10. Gardner, Anthony and Charles Green. "Mega-Exhibitions, New Publics, and Asian Art Biennials". In *Art in the Asia-Pacific: Intimate Publics*, edited by Larissa Hjorth, Natalie King, & Mami Kataoka, 23-36. New York; London: Routledge, 2014.
11. Greenberg, Reesa. *Thinking about Exhibitions*. London; New York: Routledge, 1996.
12. Ho, Oscar. "Under the Shadow: Problems in Museum Development in Asia". In *Contemporary Asian Art and Exhibitions: Connectivities and World- Making*, edited by Michelle Antoinette and Caroline Turner, 179-198. Canberra: ANU Press, 2014.
13. Hoffman, Jens. *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating*, Milan, Italy: Mousse Publishing, 2013.
14. Hoffman, Jens. *The Next Documenta Should Be Curated by An Artist* (ed.). New York: e-Flux and Revolver, 2004.
15. Hou, Hanru and Hans-Ulrich Obrist (eds.). *Cities on the Move*, exhibition catalogue. Ostfildern-Ruit: Gerd Hatje, 1997.
16. Marincola, Paula. *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, Philadelphia Center for Arts and Heritage, 2006.
17. Morin, France, Apinan Poshyananda, Mari Carmen Ramírez, Caroline Turner, Igor Zabel and Valerie Cassel. "Beyond Boundaries: Rethinking Contemporary Art Exhibitions". *Art Journal*, vol. 59 (1) (January 2000): 4-21.
18. Obrist, Hans-Ulrich. *A Brief History of Curating*. Zurich, Switzerland: JRP Ringier, 2008.
19. Poshyananda, Apinan. *Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions*. New York: Asia Society Galleries, 1996.
20. Sabapathy, T. K. and Ahmad Mashadi. *Writing the modern: selected texts on art & art history in Singapore, Malaysia & Southeast Asia, 1973-2015*. 2018.
21. Turner, Caroline. "Cultural Transformations in the Asia-Pacific: the Asia-Pacific Triennial and the Fukuoka Triennale Compared". In *Eye of the Beholder- Reception, Audience, and Practice of Modern Asian Art*, edited by John Clark, T.K. Sabapathy, and Maurizio Peleggi, 221-243. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006.

Assigned readings will generally be provided by instructor from week to week on the class TEAMS page.

Weekly Schedule, Tuesdays 1:30-4:30*

*Subject to change according to public holidays, health measures, and other unforeseen circumstances. **Week 1 (9 August 2022) NO CLASS due to NATIONAL DAY PUBLIC HOLIDAY. The time will be caught-up later in the semester in agreement with students. Week 1 class will be given in week 2 (16 August) and so on, until Week 1 class is made-up.**

Class 1: Introduction to contemporary curating (Tuesday, 16 August)

Course overview; teaching methodology; organisation and plan for the semester; the Asia/Southeast Asia focus of this course; how theory and practice are integrated in DD8012: student curating and writing projects.

Survey of historical development of exhibitions over centuries and implications for contemporary curating.

Class activity.

Class 2: Fundamental issues of contemporary curating (Tuesday, 23 August)

Learning about types of exhibition spaces (non-traditional; institutional, and so on); approaches to curating; different participants in exhibition-making; museum/gallery operations; audience & reception; contexts and audiences.

Exhibition case studies.

Class activity: curatorial writing, learning to write about and for exhibitions (part 1), proposals, reviews, curatorial essays, wall-texts; artist interviews. Beginning to map individual semester writing assignment.

Readings:

Bennett, Tony. "The Exhibitionary Complex". In *Thinking about Exhibitions*, edited by Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne, 58-80. London; New York: Routledge, 1996.

Steeds, Lucy, et al. *Making Art Global (Part 2): Magiciens de la Terre 1989*. London: Afterall Books, 2013. (Steeds, Lucy. 'Magiciens de la Terre' and the Development of Transnational Project-Based Curating', 24-93).

Class 3: Roles of the contemporary curator: educator & mediator of context, ethics & content

The emergence of the 'professional' curator; a heterogenous skill set; specificities of curating Asian/SEA art; exhibitions and social engagement.

Case studies: Documenta 15; The Philip Guston retrospective.

*'Its problems-based approach contrasts sharply with **ruangrupa's ethos of solutions**. The collective takes seriously documenta's original *raison d'être* as a post-war institution of soft power and come to the European table with a populist "hearts and minds" campaign. Documenta gGmbH's Finding Committee was looking for just this: "We have appointed ruangrupa because they have demonstrated the ability to appeal to various communities, including groups that go beyond pure art audiences, and to promote local commitment and participation". Has broader German society opened their hearts and minds to ruangrupa's Pax Indonesia?'*

'Whatever the case, far from bringing a "particularism" of the Global South that conflicted with European universalism, Taring Padi has laid bare a universalism more universal than German society is able to accommodate. Now it is German society that calls on one of the tenets of so-called post-colonial discourse to its defence. As Steyerl writes, and as Meron Mendel (Director of the Educational Institution Anne Frank) has repeated: "everything must be locally situated and historically contextualized"—by which they mean, in the German context. Representing a kind of secession from the cosmopolitan worldview, documenta fifteen has thus become perhaps the first documenta to truly take place "in" Germany, as

opposed to in the universal, contextless tabula rasa typical of global contemporary art exhibitions.'

https://memoreview.net/reviews/documenta-fifteen-by-paris-lettau?fbclid=IwAR0yETdaTdGxccc_8pzHAL2fvLhZocRviMLryC7UYhWw_jG0Er32wsaqiGg

Class activity in groups: starting to build an exhibition: selecting artworks (or not?); concept; space; audience; budget; discourse and scholarly afterlife.

Readings:

Dirgantoro, Wulan and Elly Kent. "We need to talk! Art, offence and politics in Documenta 15". *New Mandala*, 29 June, 2022.

Jacobs, Julia and Jason Farago. "Delay of Philip Guston Retrospective Divides the Art World". *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 2020.

Tracy, Marc and Robin Pogrebin. "Delayed Philip Guston Show Opens, With a Note From a Trauma Specialist". *New York Times*, May 1, 2022.

Class 4: Exhibition narrative and curatorial & exhibition typologies: thematic exhibitions; biennale models; art fair & commercial gallery curation.

Function and type of exhibitions; formats; themes, topics & issues; art genres; spectacle; curatorial and exhibitionary narrative; discourse; market; why some shows become 'canon'; context and audience (redux!)

Exhibition case studies.

Class activity: drafting an exhibition proposal.

Readings:

Turner, Caroline. "Cultural Transformations in the Asia-Pacific: the Asia-Pacific Triennial and the Fukuoka Triennale Compared". In *Eye of the Beholder- Reception, Audience, and Practice of Modern Asian Art*, edited by John Clark, T.K. Sabapathy, and Maurizio Peleggi, 221-243. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006.

Ho, Oscar. "Under the Shadow: Problems in Museum Development in Asia". In *Contemporary Asian Art and Exhibitions: Connectivities and World- Making*, edited by Michelle Antoinette and Caroline Turner, 179-198. Canberra: ANU Press, 2014.

Class 5: The Art Historian-Curator

Engagement & aesthetics; research shows & communicating art histories (which art histories?); communicating discourse issues; archival material; art or document?

Exhibition case studies.

Class activity: learning to write about and for exhibitions (part 2): writing exercises in teams, peer review and discussion, instructor comments for progressing with writing skills and individual semester writing assignment.

Readings: tba.

Class 6: The audience, Relational Aesthetics, guerrilla action in public space, non-traditional spaces

Geographic/cultural variations and social norms; contexts and datelines; aesthetics of necessity VS aesthetics of novelty; aesthetics in the patrolled, controlled public space; focus on the Southeast Asian curatorial context after 1970.

Exhibition case studies.

Class activity.

Readings:

Nicolas Bourriaud. "Foreword," and "Relational Form". In *Relational Aesthetics*. Dijon, France: Les Presses du Réel, 2002. (pp. 2-3; 4-10)

Bishop, Claire. "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics". *October*, Vol. 110 (Autumn, 2004) pp. 51-79.
Michelle Antoinette, Michelle. "Epilogue". In *Contemporary Asian Art and Exhibitions-Connectivities and World-making*, edited by Michelle Antoinette and Caroline Turner. Canberra: ANU Press, 2014. (pp. 243-244).

Rugoff, Ralph. "You talking to me? : on curating group shows that give you a chance to join the group". In *What Makes a Great Exhibition?*, edited by Paula Marincola, 44-51. Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, Philadelphia Center for Arts and Heritage, 2006.

Class 7: Practice, building an exhibition

Towards end-of-semester group curatorial project: hands-on experience and understanding of different roles and skills needed for exhibition-making and working in a gallery/museum. Students form groups to develop a mini exhibition: selection of artworks, exhibition space, designing documentation.

Practical Project and skills

- Developing curatorial concept
- Negotiating roles within the exhibition-making process
- Timeline
- Budget management
- Selection of artists and artworks
- Approaching artists
- Site inspection and selection
- Installation/De-installation (including logistics and design of display)
- Publicity
- Designing documentation: site texts (captions; wall texts) & post-event documentation such as brochure.

Semester recess: consultations for end of semester projects and writing assignments

Class 8: Exhibition discourse and the curatorial text: publishing for posterity

Concept, discourse objective, art history; scholarship. Juggling exhibition and discourse needs.

Exhibition case studies.

Class activity: in teams, students will prepare interview questions for the guest artist who will visit class.

Readings. tba

Class 9: Curating Asian and Southeast Asian art for global audiences

Questions of perspective; cultural translation; risk; institutional identity; private or public funding; using and abusing archival material.

Exhibition case studies.

Class activity: review of interview questions ahead of Class 10 with guest artist.

Readings: Clarke, David. "Contemporary Asian Art and Its Western Reception." In Contemporary Art in Asia: A critical reader, edited by Melissa Chiu and Benjamin Genocchio, 153–162. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011.

Class 10: The Artist-Curator: guest lecturer tba

Invited Southeast Asian artist will introduce methodologies of self-curation via study of her/his exhibitions.

Class Activity with artist. In groups, students will interview the artist.

Readings:

Seng, Yu Jin. "Cultural Wars in Southeast Asia: The Birth of the Critical Exhibition in the 1970s". In Charting Thoughts: Essays on Art in Southeast Asia, edited by Low Sze Wee and Patrick Flores, 214-230. Singapore: National Gallery of Singapore, 2017.

Class 11: Visiting an exhibition and writing a review

Class 12: Presentations of curatorial projects

Class 13: Presentations of curatorial projects (8 November 2022)