Ten Fundamental
Questions of
Curating

7/10
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Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy

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Publishing director
Edoardo Bonaspetti

Editor
Jens Hoffmann

Copy editor
Lindsey Westbrook

A project realized in partnership with

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Design
Studio Mousse

Issue #7

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Ten Fundamental Questions
of Curating
is printed in Italy and published
five times a year by
Mousse Publishing

Publisher
Contrappunto S.R.L.
via Arena 23
20123, Milan - Italy

What About Collecting?

Text — Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy
Visuals — Mario Garcia Torres

In front of me, stacked over my desk, are more than two dozen publications on or about curating. They are mainly anthologies; some are interview books. There are also a couple of journals and several folders of article clippings on the subject. I've read most, re-read a few, skimmed all. I've highlighted sections, marked a page here and there. I've used these publications throughout the years for inspiration. They've helped me think about ways of working with artists, find ways of resolving institutional challenges, and creatively engage existing or new publics. I've used these publications for reference to articulate curatorial processes for certain projects, and to think about exhibition formats and their histories. As of late, however, I find myself referring to them less and less often. It is not because they are no longer influential for me or because I now consider them irrelevant. It is because they mostly do not address one of the aspects of curating that I am currently exploring.

Let me disclose this up front: After having spent a decade curating in nonprofit arts organizations and public institutions, where commissioning art was my modus operandi, I've spent a year curating a collection of contemporary art for a private foundation, the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros. In this new role, research and art acquisitions are tasks finely intertwined with building a discourse around a body of existing works and a current set of practices. (I have yet to begin interpreting the collection publicly, through exhibitions or other initiatives, but I will come to the topic of activating collections further on.) On a regular basis, colleagues ask me if I still curate. I've found the question both surprising and disconcerting,

but productive nonetheless. My first response was the obvious, or so I thought: Curating collections includes devising a selection criterion and entails a program, a direction, as well as the caring for and interpretation of artworks and, I will add, the consideration of artistic practices. I keep forgetting that common sense does not exist; dominant discourses do. Contemporary curating is generally associated with exhibition making. Most importantly, I keep overlooking that collecting is tied to the art market, money, interests, and other touchy subjects that are perceived, perhaps, as somewhat shameful or too real; that these are subjects if not forces that defy the autonomy that artistic and curatorial practices tend to ferociously defend. Eventually, I stopped making such an effort to respond to the question, and instead put my mind to understanding how such a question could arise.

This is when I began noticing that most publications on curating elude collecting practices of contemporary art, whether at the institutional or the individual level, the public or the private sector. Sure, there are texts about collecting—institutional histories, collection catalogues, interviews with and profiles of individual collectors, and publications of exhibitions studying artistic tendencies of archiving and collecting. But why is it that in print and in discussions on contemporary curating, the subject of art collecting practices fails to be addressed? What are the paradigms that have formed the dominant discourses of contemporary curating, where temporality, which appears to be entangled in the concept of newness, but is not its equivalent, is championed over permanence, which in turn seems associated with collections? How is it that in the foundational, contemporary curatorial study programs courses on collecting are missed? What could be some of the topics on collecting, if it were to be addressed in curatorial discussions? And, ultimately, why would it even be relevant to address collecting practices in the frame of contemporary curating?

In the past two decades, the working dynamic between artists and curators, and between curators and institutions, has been the focal subject of many discussions on contemporary curating. The leading questions have been how ideas are manifested spatially, negotiated contextually, and mediated publicly. One reason why collecting practices are largely absent in discussions of contemporary curating is that many of the individuals considered paradigmatic for having expanded curatorial practice were not in charge of building or interpreting collections. And if they were, that work and their curatorial contributions to the subject of collecting practices are as yet unexplored. Another explanation, somewhat connected to the first, is that exhibitions involving context- and site-specific art have been fundamental to expanding contemporary curatorial practice.[1] Such exhibitions turn people and places into hosts and guests of an art exhibition. They also turn site into situation, and give preference to subjects over objects.[2] That curatorial shift owes much to exhibitions of "new art" in the 1960s.[3] A special emphasis has since been placed on the conversation-driven relationship between the artist and the curator, a collaborative relationship that impacts both the making and the format of exhibitions.[4] These generally contextual and intention-weighty discussions began widening curatorial practice,[5] and by the 1990s, the role of the contemporary art curator, beyond the old dichotomy of the connoisseur or the *auteur*-cum-exhibition maker, was starting to be publicly voiced and defined.[6] Descriptive terms abounded, some of which are still in currency, such as the curator as catalyst, cultural agent, and producer.[7]

For better or worse, the articulation of contemporary curatorial practices was assisted by the emergence of formal study programs. Contemporary curating came under both the spotlight and the microscope.[8] In 1992 the Royal College of Art in London began a graduate program in curating. De Appel in Amsterdam initiated its Curatorial Programme in 1994. That same

year in New York, Bard College's Center for Curatorial Studies (CCS Bard), which was founded in 1990, launched its curating master's degree program. These three programs all started with, and continue to maintain a focus on, curating contemporary art[9]; of these, only CCS Bard, where I studied from 1998 to 2000, developed a museum with an art collection alongside its program of study.[10] At the time of my studies there, it appeared that the museum was under a certain scrutiny. Publication titles such as *On the Museum's Ruins* and *Museum Without Walls* and the exhibitions *Mining the Museum* and *Museum as Muse* were influential and incessantly cited.[11] Institutional Critique was an established art practice and mindset, as were revisionist methodologies, thanks to poststructuralism and postcolonial theories.[12] Informal though prevalent discussions at school also focused on networks and contemporary art institutions in Eastern Europe created post-1989, and on the art spaces there that were crumbling, redefining themselves, or starting up on the occasion of the political and socioeconomic reorganization of the region. Political changes were indeed triggering or, in some cases, simply "internationalizing" other kinds of festival-driven organizations, such as the contemporary art biennial exhibition format.[13] Curatorial practice was imbued with connotations of political efficacy and a kind of mandate to carry out cultural critique; curators were now expected to produce exhibitions and discourses that were somehow alternatives to shows of celebration, spectacle, and populism.

Somewhat in the background at school, yet at the forefront in the media, were the opening of the Guggenheim Bilbao and the market frenzy surrounding the YBAs; their media impact was no doubt a major contributing factor in the unprecedented popularization that contemporary art was enjoying, and has since, on a global scale. In the classroom, however, critiques centered on the meaning of a museum name being franchised, and on questioning, among other things, why the publicly

funded Brooklyn Museum was taking on *Sensations*, an exhibition of contemporary British art from Charles Saatchi's private collection.[14] Not even then—whether in seminars, essays, or informal debates—did discussions of contemporary curating methodically address art collecting practices at either the institutional or individual level.[15] At CCS Bard there was a single though well-intentioned practicum with the goal of collectively curating, as a class, an exhibition of artworks from its museum collection. Even then, the collection was a given, and the process lacked any sustained dialogue about its makeup or the museum's acquisition processes. My recollections of our discussions in graduate school—which were far more animated than this version—drive home how little attention was given to the histories and precedents and case studies surrounding collecting.

If art collecting practices were addressed in discussions of contemporary curating, I think that these could be some guiding topics: collaboration, contingencies, and responsiveness to art innovations. To elucidate on these, I will briefly touch upon some cases that I've been researching, leaving for a different occasion other ones, such as experimental art dealers in the 1960s, genealogies of video art, the parameters set by time-based work, et cetera. I approach this text as a work in progress and am sharing highlights of current research from firsthand experience. Hopefully this text is the start of a conversation.

In regards to collaboration, two cases come to mind, one being the independent initiative Société Anonyme, which could very well be considered a proto-curatorial office, and the other being the German Kunstverein. The Société Anonyme was founded by Kathryn Dreier, Man Ray, and Marcel Duchamp. The peculiarity of this itinerant organization was that its mission included activities of both programming and collecting. With a pedagogical mission,[16] it created dozens of programs

and exhibitions of "progressive art" between 1920 and 1940; it also developed a collection, which began with donations by the artists it exhibited. When it ceased its activities, it donated its collection to a research museum, the Yale University Art Gallery.[17] What I find interesting of the German Kunstverein is its foundational, membership-base administrative model, which allowed this type of institution to be, for at least a century, financially self-sustaining and culturally edifying.[18] In 1836 in Hamburg, the Kunstverein model introduced a culture of art collecting to its community. Acquisitions were made through the investment of membership fees, and artworks were distributed to members through a raffle system. I find two particular things interesting in these examples. First is that the founders of the Société were artist-curators, and those of the Kunstvereine were the burgeoning middle class, not the State or aristocrats—that is, groups of people rather than a single patron.[19] Also interesting are the "ends" of the collections. Instead of founding a museum to house its collection, the Société strengthened an existing institution, and also ensured that future audiences would be able to study and experience the collection. The collection is exemplary of the art and material culture of the times as well as the Société's aspirations and artistic community—a window into its belief in the progressive, the modern, the new. In the case of the Kunstverein, the raffle system (which, to my knowledge, is no longer in place) encouraged art appreciation and an especially horizontal formation of a collector base community. The potential of this latter condition shaped a culture of philanthropy.

When I mention the topic of contingencies in collecting practices, I mean to say how certain collecting policies and activities unexpectedly circumscribe art histories. Looking at institutional collecting policies may help inform current explorations of the meaning of the contemporary in art. For example, consider the formative years of the painting and sculpture

collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Since its origins, MoMA "conceived of a collection that would 'metabolically' discard older works as it acquired newer ones, to honor the spirit of 'modern' as meaning of the present, and ever-changing."[20] That didn't exactly happen. What did happen is that "the modern" became a period with a beginning and an end, a territory within the field of art history, a project and ideology that preceded "the contemporary." The metabolic principle, originally envisioned to tactically address the constant contemporary, was considered again some decades later in the same city by the New Museum of Contemporary Art. While pronouncing itself a museum from the start, the New Museum didn't declare outright a mission to form an art collection until 1978, a year after its opening. That was when the museum initiated its "Semi-Permanent Collection, a concept that would allow the Museum to rotate and review its collection by deaccessioning works after ten years. The idea was never fully implemented, however."[21] The driving question giving shape to this policy—"Could a collection of contemporary art remain contemporary?"—was revisited by an exhibition at their venue in 1995, yet not much tackled thereafter.[22]

In my current research, I've also been studying how certain private collections have been made publicly accessible, and the ways in which such shifts have generated new institutional models for the exhibition and conservation of contemporary art. In that investigation, I've particularly focused on how contemporary artistic practices shape collecting practices, and how these form new kinds of museums. For instance, consider Philippa de Menil and her husband, Heiner Friedrich, creators of Dia Art Foundation in 1974. Their collecting practice was inspired by a particular set of artistic practices of the 1960s and 1970s. Part of Dia's collection is sited throughout the United States, at the original sites where the artworks were created by the artists. Among other projects, it includes their com-

mission and ongoing care of Walter De Maria's *The Lightning Field* (1977), an earthwork located in New Mexico, and since 1999 the acquisition and care of Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) in Utah's Great Salt Lake. Dia Foundation's commitment to site-specific art, long-term exhibitions, and commissioning work is also characteristic of their acquisition and conservation policy. While Dia's collection also includes discrete works displayed in galleries, namely at their building in Beacon, New York, its multi-sited version of a museum proposes an alternative model that responds to and respects a new art form. Some of the questions to which I try to respond today center around the collection or conservation of project work emanating from social art practices and similar forms of current art making endemically sited in particular places. The differences between Earthworks and socially engaged projects are no doubt plenty. One such is centered on communities, yet both require an experience of site, involving a pilgrimage for a public to experience the artwork in person. That social projects also have ends—these mostly begin and end, become something other that is far from a general understanding of art; these do not have intentions of being collectable but of becoming catalysts for change—unlike that of the art object begs the question of whether a collection in the traditional sense, of a museum, is what is needed to house them for future experiences. What the options could be, I don't know yet with clarity. But the reason for thinking of options is clear: A series of photographs under a vitrine, or books and videos, only tell about these projects, and fail to generate the experiences that they put in motion. I often wonder if a new kind of multi-sited museum must be created to study, conserve, and necessarily reimagine this work as time goes on.

So this is where I am at—with questions fueled by curiosity triggered when studying a variety of collections and institutions, and when visiting artists' studios, seeing exhibitions, traveling

to experience projects and art scenes. Without a doubt, I was giving much thought to collections before joining the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros. This was particularly while I was directing Museo Tamayo in Mexico City some years ago. But the curatorial challenges there were so different; at that museum, more situations than questions needed response. My focus then was devising ways of "activating" an existing museum collection that had been largely unattended precisely because it failed to cohesively represent a time period, artistic practice, or art scene.

A brief introduction to that kind of collecting practice, which I sense is commonly appearing nowadays in different guises: During the 1970s and 1980s, the artist Rufino Tamayo formed a collection of international contemporary art expressly for a museum. His vision for the collection was influenced by his travel experiences (his art was recognized abroad earlier than in Mexico, his native country) as well as his anxiety over a certain sense of nationalism in the arts of Mexico (as denoted by the constant praise of Muralism). Tamayo's aim was to present visual art, artistic concerns, and philosophical topics being explored abroad to a local audience. In order to form this collection, Tamayo mainly acquired works through exchanges and purchases carried out with his own gallery, Marlborough. Thus, the collection is largely the product of Tamayo's and that gallery's vision of art. The museum opened to the public in 1981 under the auspices of a corporation, Televisa.

Then, in 1986, after several disagreements with the museum administration, Tamayo requested that the institution and its collection be nationalized. And so it happened. Museo Tamayo passed from being privately administered to joining the national network of state-run museums. Tamayo and his wife, Olga, who had been pretty much single-handedly forming the collection, passed away some years later. Since the State lacked

a systematic program for acquisitions, the collection was then stalled, like those of most other public art collections in Mexico. Museo Tamayo's collection was seldom incremented, primarily through donations by foundations or exhibiting artists, and the chronological and discursive gaps widened between its temporary exhibitions and its permanent collection. To add to this, in the last decade, collections of contemporary art in Mexico have been almost exclusively created privately, by individuals; in some cases these collections are made publicly accessible in galleries founded by their owners. (Not that this situation is so disconnected from Museo Tamayo's own history.) In the back of my mind, I thought about Inés Katzenstein's prognosis for private collectors opening museums: "Within institutionally weak contexts . . . such projects tend to mislead audiences in terms of what they should expect of a museum."[23] What may those expectations be? No doubt they are of curatorially articulating how and why things get there—how and why they are collected, displayed, and valued. And no doubt it is a curatorial framework that can provide a sense of rationale . . . or whim.

If the Museo Tamayo collection was not exactly representative of so-called international and contemporary art, there were still ways to work with it meaningfully. Artworks in the collection could shed light on current practices, could be shown to discuss pertinent issues of our times, could be used for curatorial experimentation. To create a program that would ensure this at the museum, I looked at several contemporary curatorial initiatives that were creatively activating collections. There were several influential initiatives, and I will mention two here. One was a program led by the then chief curator at the Bronx Museum of the Arts in New York, Marysol Nieves, and the other was a series of exhibitions by Charles Esche and Annie Fletcher at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. At the Bronx Museum, Nieves invited artists to use the collection for

creating projects. The most playful was *Manicurated* (2001) by Judi Werthein. For this part-exhibition, part–participatory project, Werthein displayed a number of artworks in one of the museum galleries and set up a manicure salon at its center, where audiences could have their nails professionally painted according to the artworks of their choice, all the while discussing artistic intent and content. At the Van Abbemuseum, the ongoing project *Play Van Abbe* uses the collection in different scenarios—exhibitions, performances, lectures, et cetera—responding to the question of an institution's mission to collect. More recently, their exhibition within this series, *The Pilgrim, the Tourist, the Flaneur (and the Worker)* (2011) has paid attention to forms of experiencing culture, and accordingly offered mediation tools to accompany the exhibition.

At the Museo Tamayo, the program for activating the collection had different iterations. We launched a magazine, *Rufino,* and commissioned emerging art curators and historians to write about artworks of their choice in the collection, whether the artworks were in the galleries or in storage. The exhibition program was quite diverse. Curator Raimundas Malasauskas worked with the artists Gintaras Didziapetris and Rosalind Nashashibi to "shrink" the museum floor plan into a single gallery and display artworks that confused world proportions. The curator Daniela Perez worked with the artist Jorge Méndez Blake in creating an installation taking as its cue the personal library of Rufino Tamayo, which is part of the museum's holdings. In like manner, the curator Juan Carlos Pereda worked with the artist Alejandro Cesarco to make a work using photographs and 8-mm films from Rufino Tamayo's research and travels. The curator Magali Arriola has been working with the artist Ryan Gander to revisit the first installation that entered the museum collection, during the days of Olga and Rufino Tamayo's acquisitions: an artwork by George Segal. None of these curatorial approaches used the collection to offer grand narratives of

what so-called modern or contemporary art was or is. They did do something just as important: research a collection and give it visibility using a curatorial rationale. Whether by experiencing a single exhibition or the entire series, the proposal offered the public different ways of experiencing a corpus of work as a "current of thought."

* * *

Notes

In 2008, the artist Mario Garcia Torres threw 24 bottles at different shores of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, in hopes that these would arrive at Panama City in time for the edition of the Panama Biennale taking place that year. Each of the bottles contained a painted white monochrome canvas with a note stating that it was an artwork, and requesting that when found it be sent to the biennale venue in Panama City. The note also stated that if it were to be found after 2008, the canvas could be sent to the artist's studio in Los Angeles. Dates and address were noted. To date, no canvas has been returned. The empty stretchers are in a private collection.

1. Since the late 1980s and throughout the early 1990s, sites to consider in exhibitions ranged from an entire city or a particular neighborhood to an abandoned or inhabited building, and, to some lesser extent, a collection or storage facility at a museum. Art projects by Michael Asher and Andrea Fraser, among others, are exemplary of this latter idea of reviewing and exposing rationales (and whims) of museum collections.

2. Among the most influential exhibitions of the time that championed this curatorial approach were *Chambres des amis* (1986) in Belgium; *Places with a Past: New Site-Specific Art* (1991) in the United States; and *Sonsbeek: Project Unite* (1993) in Holland. The *Migrateurs* project series (started in 1993) of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris was also important. Initiated in 2003 by Hans Ulrich Obrist, it was "an attempt to locate the exhibition both inside and outside the museum . . . to have exhibitions where one least expects them." See "Can Exhibitions be Collected: Hans Ulrich Obrist interviewed by Noah Horowitz" in *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Curating, But Were Afraid to Ask* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011): 149.

3. For example, to the emphasis on site and its relationship to the multidisciplinary and the participatory in exhibitions such as *Dylaby: A Dynamic Labyrinth* (1962) at Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and *Hon: She—A Cathedral* (1966) at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. By the mid-1960s, however, site slipped away from the confines of gallery spaces. See Pontus Hultén interviewed by Hans Ulrich Obrist in *A Brief History of Curating* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2010): 40–41. This interview was originally conducted in 1996 and published in 1997.

On another note, these abovementioned exhibitions were probably influenced in some way by avant-garde exhibitions such as El Lissitzky's interactive installations, Fredrick Kiesler's exhibition displays, and Marcel Duchamp and Salvador Dalí's Surrealist exhibitions. Dalí's *Birth of Venus* (1939) especially comes to mind when looking at images of *Hon: She—A Cathedral*. Anyway, what is palpable is that a certain sensibility, a playful attitude, from those earlier public presentations of art trickled into the exhibitions of the 1960s.

In New York, Seth Siegelbaub's intent to find "different ways and possibilities to show art, different contexts and environments" ensued in the creation of a variety of exhibition formats. See Seth Siegelaub in an interview by Hans Ulrich Obrist in *A Brief History of Curating* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2010): 120–21. This interview was originally conducted in 2000 and published in 2011.

Concurrently, the 1969 group exhibitions *Op Losse Schroeven*, curated by Wim Beeren for the Stedelijk in Amsterdam, and *When Attitudes Become Form—Works, concepts, processes, situations, information* by Harald Szeemann for the Kunsthalle in Bern, were literally groundbreaking presentations of "new art." See Christian Rattemeyer, *Exhibiting the New Art, vol. 1* (London: Afterall, 2010). Szeemann's exhibition was as influential as his ensuing resignation from his directorial position at the Kunsthalle Bern, marking the start of his trajectory as an "independent curator." Daniel Birnmbaum points out that, with his resignation, Szeemann became "something that had never previously existed, assuming a role that would affect the most fundamental operations of the art-world community for decades to come: the independent curator." See "When Attitude Becomes Form: Daniel Birnbaum on Harald Szeemann" *Artforum* (summer 2005): 55.

4. I make this observation based on the curators' description of their practice and processes toward exhibition making as noted in *A Brief History of Curating.* It is important to note that many of the interviews collected in that book were conducted and published between the mid-1990s and the early 2000s, for instance the one with Pontus Hultén in 1996–97; Seth Siegelaub in 2000–2001; Harald Szeemann in 1995–96. This is also telling of their relevance in 1990s exhibition making and expanding notions of curating.

5. These relationships triggered questions such as where and when art was made, of how and when to make it public, and by who or for whom it was done. With time, that dialogic relationship became more inclusive of other exhibition interlocutors, from specialists to general audiences, provoking among other things more event-based work and socially engaged projects.

6. In the mid-1990s, *Artforum* began consistently publishing interviews with curators discussing their exhibitions and practices. There were other attempts, including Michael Brenson's groundbreaking essay (and conference report) "The Curator's Moment," published in *Art Journal*, vol. 57, no. 4 (winter 1998): 16–27. Also see Jens Hoffmann, "A Certain Tendency of Curating" in *Curating Subjects*, ed. Paul O'Neill (London: Open Editions, 2007): 137–42; and take note of the curatorial journal that he founded, *The Exhibitionist*, whose first number was published in January 2010.

7. See “Stopping the Process?,” a publication that crystallizes then-current explorations on curatorial tasks. It’s considerably a seed publication on the subject of contemporary curating to the many conferences, books, and articles that followed.

8. I do somewhat apologize that the influences I mention here are, with few exceptions, pretty much focusing on Western art and exhibitions. This was a reality of the accessible references (I had) and the dominant discourses (I participated in and that were) circulating and being discussed at the time. If anything, the “professionalization” in the field of curating contemporary art—fueled by both art history and curatorial study programs shaped in the 1980s and 1990s, the communities they created, and the exhibitions, art criticism, and scholarship that followed—have significantly diversified the pool of references and discussions.

A handful of now-seminal publications dedicated to exhibition history were influential on my decision to apply to school, and have been key references to the field at large: Bruce Althshuler’s *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition* (1994) and the anthology *Thinking About Exhibitions* (1996) edited by Bruce Ferguson and Reesa Greenberg. Another formative book of the times was *The Power of Display* (1998), a historical analysis of exhibition design focused on the Museum of Modern Art in New York, by Mary Anne Staniszewski. Paradoxically, in the three foundational curating schools that I list here, few to none of the authors in the abovementioned publications were fully involved in the formation of these programs or in the day-to-day of these schools, nor were key practitioners responsible for making curating as elastic a practice as it was then or even as it is today. As the school year began at CCS Bard, during the fall of 1998, we were handed the publication *Stopping the Process?*, an anthology of statements by active curators reflecting on their practices.

9. At that point, contemporary art largely referred to postwar art using as its basis a Western art historical canon, even if Conceptual art of the 1960s and after was the main impulse, or if group exhibitions of art after 1989, which were presented at the time, posited a new historical *episteme*. On another note, many other institutions worldwide were creating study courses or full-on programs of the kind.

10. See CCS Bard’s statement on its official website (last accessed on November 11, 2011): http://www.bard.edu/ccs/museum/collection. This is an excerpt: “The foundation of the Center’s permanent collection is the Marieluise Hessel Collection of 1,780 paintings, sculptures, photographs, works on paper, artists’ books, videos, and video installations from the mid-1960s to the present. . . . The permanent collection also has works that have been given to the Center by Eileen and Michael Cohen, Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz, Asher Edelman, Martin and Rebecca Eisenberg, Robert Gober, Joan and Gerald Kimmelman, Eileen Harris Norton and Peter Norton, Toni and Martin Sosnoff, Thea Westreich, and Ethan Wagner. . . . The collection also provides the basis for faculty research and teaching.” My summary of recollections of the courses and discussions held during my student years at CCS Bard are written for the sole purpose of this text’s argument on the lack of attention given to art collecting practices in discussions of contemporary curating.

11. I want to thank Niko Vicario for making this observation, and for reminding me how influential *On the Museum’s Ruins* was during that time.

12. There are many examples to give on this subject. Let me name a couple of instances that were influential to me, as they pertained to critiques of curatorial and institutional practices: Brian Wallis was analyzing the impact of neo-liberalism in the scholarship, sponsorship, and media representation of nation-centered

exhibitions, and Mari Carmen Ramirez was breaking-down discourses “beyond the fantastic” in U.S. exhibitions of Latin American art. See Mari Carmen Ramirez, “Beyond the Fantastic: Framing Identity in U.S. Exhibitions of Latin American Art” in *Art Journal*, vol. 51, no. 4 (winter 1992): 60–68; Mari Carmen Ramirez, “Brokering Identities: Art Curators and the Politics of Cultural Representation” in *Thinking About Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 2006): 22–31; and Brian Wallis, “Selling Nations . . .” in *Museum Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994/2011): 265–81.

13. While the itinerant biennial, Manifesta, whose first edition was in 1996, can be symptomatic of the lure for mobility topical of the times, the intentions of the incipient Johannesburg Biennial for creating an artistic event to consolidate communities in post-Apartheid South Africa signaled a wider political context for cultural work. (The Johanessburg Biennial closed in 1997, with its second edition curated by Okwui Enwezor.) Paulo Herkenhoff’s use of the concept of anthropophagy as a lens to look at art in the 23rd São Paulo Biennial (1996) overturned any prior understanding of influence and hegemony. See *The Biennial Reader*, Elena Filipovic, Marieke Van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebø, eds. (Norway: Bergen Kunsthalle and Hatje Cantz, 2010).

14. Courses were led by the art critic Michael Brenson and the artist Andrea Fraser, among others.

15. There is no question that at school—whether in study programs of art history, curatorial or museum studies, et cetera—only the basics of “contemporary art” are actually learned. Most of one’s knowledge of “the contemporary” actually takes place in the field, through the experience of working at institutions and with artists. My observations here of “what was taught and discussed” at school are to emphasize how the discursive weight in and of curatorial practice, diminished attention to the histories and future care of the object of art (and anything can be turned into a “work,” as Conceptualism in the 1960s, and performance today, has proved). It is also to advocate that curatorial study programs can, at best, teach forms of thinking curatorially, and at worst champion spaces and forms of exhibition making. It is also to suggest that, as it turns out, with the market pressures, it is ideal to learn some of the histories of art collections and issues on collecting practices.

16. Their mission was to study and introduce so-called progressive art in America, namely, the “new art” of the times and what is referred to today as modern art.

17. The Société Anonyme closed its operations once the Museum of Modern Art in New York was founded. Marcel Duchamp, who executed the will of Kathryn Dreier, herself an artist, art patron, and collector, was responsible for donating to public museums many of the artworks in her private collection. This included Duchamp’s own work in Dreier’s collection, which was donated to the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

18. Seeing its possibilities—and the artistic interests and financial possibilities of many young professionals today—it is surprising how a programming institution such as the Kunstverein, and similar collaborative collecting initiatives, have not been influential to newer contemporary art institutions and collections. Sort of a disclosure: I am a board member of the Kunstverein Amsterdam, founded in 2009 by Krist Gruijthuijsen and Maxine Kopsa. The administrative model and funding strategies of this flexible contemporary art institution reflect and test the membership model, and while it’s been a challenge and, for the time being, mostly subsidized through public and private grants, it is slowly expanding a community of audiences and members. Considering the severe public funding cuts for arts in the Netherlands, which were

announced this year, the model of the Kunstverein emerges at a timely moment in Amsterdam.

19. See Barbara Hess, “Kunstverein in Crisis” in *Metropolis M*, no. 5, 2010. She introduces this pointing out that “The early founders of Kunstvereins were generally neither philanthropists nor rich patrons, but representatives of an aspiring, wealthy bourgeoisie wishing, in the period leading up to the 1848 revolution, to challenge the supremacy of the aristocracy not only in economic terms but also culturally.” In this illuminating article, Hess also describes the ways in which the Kunstverein has evolved both over time—due to wars, changes in the field, et cetera—and in terms of its members, missions, and visions. So has its finances and funding base.

20. Inspired by the relationship that the Musée de Luxembourg in Paris had with the Musée du Louvre, the MoMA held a more than 20-year discussion with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, so that the latter institution could take on artworks in the MoMA’s collection once these were deemed “classics.” For a detailed essay on this, see Kirk Varnedoe, “The Evolving Torpedo: Changing Ideas of the Collection of Painting and Sculpture of the Museum of Modern Art” in *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: Continuity and Change* (New York: MoMA, 1995): 12–73.

21. See the New Museum’s website: http://www.newmuseum.org/about/history (last accessed on November 1, 2011).

22. See the New Museum’s website: http://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/289/temporarily_possessed_the_semipermanent_collection (last accessed on November 1, 2011).

23. See Inés Katzenstein’s statement in the special museum issue of Artforum, summer 2010: http://artforum.com/inprint/issue+201006&id+25707 (last accessed on June 29, 2011).

Painting Between The Lines

CCA Wattis Institute, San Francisco
October 4–December 17, 2011
Exhibition supported by Fiorucci Art Trust

Norbert Schwontkowski, Dorian Gray, 2011, oil on canvas, 59 x 51 1/4 in. (149.9 x 130.2 cm). Courtesy the artist; Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin; and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York.

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