

# Curating, Care and Community

Thursday 3 September 2020, 10.30 – 16.00

A seminar organised by the British Art Network's Early Career Curators Group

The word 'curator' derives from the Latin word *curare*, 'to care'. As curators, we are charged with the physical and intellectual care of collections – the artworks, objects and narratives found within our cultural institutions. However, it is evident to us as a group of early career curators from a range of disciplinary backgrounds that the concept of care within our sector must stretch beyond the guardianship of cultural heritage, to the care of and concern for those around us. With this in mind, what role does 'care' play in a more holistic sense in our work? How do we care for each other, within both our institutional and local communities?

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, museum staff increasingly struggled to fulfil their expanding responsibilities due to funding and resource shortages. With the additional pressures and uncertainties presented by the current situation, it is even more vital to ask how our organisations can care sufficiently for staff, artists and collaborators, as well as the audiences and public they serve. What opportunities might this new context offer to reshape our sector and working practices around principles of care? We do not seek consensus in searching for answers to these questions – rather we hope to provoke substantive, productive discussion.

- 10.30 Welcome with Helen Record (ECCG) and Jemma Desai
- 10.45 Panel discussion – *Ways of Organising*  
Kirsteen Macdonald (Chapter Thirteen) *Chapter Thirteen: independent curators and cooperative institutions*  
Marissa Begonia (The Voice of Domestic Workers), Wing Chan and Rhea Kalapura (MRes: Art: Exhibition Studies, Central Saint Martins) *Care and collectivity: 'To care, to educate, to politicise'*  
Q&A chaired by Marcus Jack (ECCG)
- 11.40 Comfort break
- 11.45 *How can curatorial practice intervene and develop techniques of 'repair'?*  
Amrita Dhallu, Assistant Curator, International Art at Tate Modern  
Q&A chaired by Jemma Desai
- 12:15 *Human-centred collections care: A conversation with Tai Shani*  
Tai Shani, artist, and Beth Hughes, Curator at the Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre (pre-recorded interview)  
Q&A with Beth Hughes chaired by Jemma Desai
- 12.45 Lunch
- 13:45 Welcome back with Jemma Desai
- 13.55 *Breaking Assumptive Ableisms in Decolonising the Arts*  
Khairani Barokka, Research Fellow and Researcher-in-Residence at UAL's Decolonising Arts Institute, and Associate Artist at the National Centre for Writing  
Q&A chaired by Jemma Desai
- 14:25 Panel presentations - *Working with Communities*  
Sam Curtis (Bethlem Gallery) *Under Construction: Care with and for communities on and off line*  
Adi Lerer and Alison Jones (Tate Liverpool) *Case Study: Talking Pictures: Every Picture Tells a Story*  
Jade French (University of Leeds) *Curating Using Social Care Practices: Transforming Curating into an Accessible Practice for Learning Disabled People*  
Chaired by Jessie Petheram (ECCG)

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- 15:10 Comfort break
- 15:15 Panel Q&A – *Working with Communities*
- 15:40 Closing remarks with Helen Record (ECCG) and Jemma Desai

## Host

**Jemma Desai** (she/her) is based in London. She has a background in film programming for institutions such as British Film Institute and British Council and has recently completed a research project 'This Work isn't For Us' which draws attention to the human cost of attempting institutional reform while navigating 'diversity' policy rooted in white supremacy.

## Speakers

### *Chapter Thirteen: independent curators and cooperative institutions*

**Kirsteen Macdonald** (she/her) is co-founder of the curatorial co-operative Chapter Thirteen, and has initiated discursive platforms for curators including Framework (2011-15) and the peer-learning project Curatorial Studio with the Scottish Contemporary Art Network (2016-20). She co-curated *What's Love Got To Do With It?* with philosopher Vanessa Brito at Galerie Art-Cade, Marseille (2018); has worked with Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art (2009-12); Timespan, Helmsdale, Sutherland, (2010-12); and was Director of The Changing Room, Stirling (2001-09). Between 2014-18 she was Lecturer in Design, History & Theory at the Glasgow School of Art. Her AHRC funded practice-based doctoral research at the GSA was completed in 2020.

### *Care and collectivity: 'To care, to educate, to politicise'*

**Marissa Begonia** (she/her) is a mother of 3 children and a founding member of The Voice of Domestic Workers. She has worked as a domestic worker in the Philippines, Singapore and Hong Kong, and finally in the UK in the search for a better life and to provide for a future for her children. Marissa arrived in the UK in 2004 through an Overseas Domestic Worker Visa. After escaping from abusive employer, she found an employer who allowed her to work with the VODW. In 2011 she finally had the opportunity to be reunited with her children and brought them to the UK after 17 years of separation. Marissa's own experience has led her to advocate and fight for justice for her fellow domestic workers. In 2010 and 2011 she represented the UK with the TUC and Unite during the International Labour Organisation Convention 189 tripartite debate at the United Nations, Geneva (now ratified by 29 countries). She also represented the UK in the global forum on the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (which sought measures to ensure respect for and protection of the Human Rights of all migrants, with particular reference to women and children), at the United Nations in New York in 2013. VODW is currently campaigning for the rights of migrant domestic workers to be re-instated: their right to change employer, the right to renew their visa and the right to citizenship.

**Wing Chan** (she/her) is currently studying MRes Art: Exhibition Studies at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. She was editor at MCCM Creations, an independent publishing house based in Hong Kong and specialised in bilingual visual culture books. She has particular interest in shaping and making books in the field of art and humanities. She looks at the potential of editing and translation in artist books as well as art historical research. She also moonlights as translator for several projects related to art and archiving, including *Nara Yoshitomo* (Yeewan Koon, 2020), *Sightlines* (Michelle Wong and Wei Leng Tay, 2017 & 2019), *Memory Machine* (Tyler Coburn, 2017), and *Journeys of Leung Ping Kwan, a Retrospective* (Oscar Ho, 2014/2015), among others.

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**Rhea Kalapura** (she/her) is a design expert who has worked at some of the leading design firms in Dubai. She has worked alongside practitioners at various levels of the industry in solution-minded collaboration. Her research interests include user experience strategy and engagement, with a foundation in design thinking. Rhea is currently studying MRes Art: Exhibition Studies at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London.

## *How can curatorial practice intervene and develop techniques of 'repair'?*

**Amrita Dhallu** (she/her) is a curator and researcher based across Liverpool and London. She provides support structures for emerging British artists through commissioning, creating artistic networks and establishing intergenerational learning spaces. Her current research radically positions care, healing and wellbeing within arts education and exhibition-making, supporting artists in re-thinking ways of professional development. She is the lead artist of Camden Art Centre's 2018-19 PEER FORUM. She currently holds the post of Assistant Curator, International Art at Tate Modern, London and is an Associate Board Member for a-n.

## *Human-centred collections care: A conversation with Tai Shani*

**Beth Hughes** (she/her) is Curator at the Arts Council Collection based at Southbank Centre. Beth's curatorial practice balances the fundamental belief in the importance and power of public collections with a dedicated commitment to collaboration, access, equality and diversity. Since joining the Arts Council Collection, Beth has curated the touring exhibition *Criminal Ornamentation: Yinka Shonibare MBE curates the Arts Council Collection* as well as *Grayson Perry: The Vanity of Small Differences*, alongside advising on a number of exhibitions across the country as part of the exhibition loan programme. Prior to this Beth was Curator at Lakeland Arts over two venues, Abbot Hall Art Gallery and Blackwell, The Arts and Crafts House, where she curated *Barbara Hepworth: Within the Landscape* and *Patrick Caulfield*.

**Tai Shani** (she/her) is an artist living and working in London. Her multidisciplinary practice, comprising performance, film, photography and installation, revolves around experimental narrative texts. Tai creates violent, erotic and fantastical images told in a dense, floral language which re-imagines female otherness as a perfect totality, set in a world complete with cosmologies, myth and histories that negate patriarchal narratives. These alternate between familiar stylistic tropes and structures and theoretical prose in order to explore the construction of subjectivity, excess and the effects of the epic as the ground for a post-patriarchal realism. Tai's project DC Productions (2014-2019) proposed an allegorical city of women. It was an experimental and expanded adaptation of Christine de Pizan's 1405 pioneering feminist book *The Book of the City of Ladies*, within which Christine builds an city for notable women drawn from a medieval conception of history where fact, fiction and myth are blurred. This non-hierarchical approach also determined the construction of the characters and narrative of DC. The collected texts were published in 2019 as *Our Fatal Magic*. Tai is the joint 2019 Turner Prize winner together with Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Helen Cammock and Oscar Murillo. In 2019 Tai was a Max Mara prize nominee. Her work has been shown at Turner Contemporary (2019); Grazer Kunstverein, Austria (2019); Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2019); Glasgow International (2018); Wysing Arts Centre (2017); Serpentine Galleries (2016); Tate (2016); Yvonne Lambert Gallery, Berlin (2016) and Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2016).

## *Breaking Assumptive Ableisms in Decolonising the Arts*

**Khairani Barokka** (she/her/hers/dia) is an Indonesian writer, artist and researcher in London, whose work has been presented extensively, in fifteen countries. She is currently Research Fellow and Researcher-in-Residence at UAL's Decolonising Arts Institute, as well as Associate Artist at the National Centre for Writing. Among Okka's honours, she was an NYU Tisch Departmental Fellow, Modern Poetry in Translation's Inaugural Poet-in-Residence, and a UNFPA Indonesian Young Leader Driving Social Change. Her interdisciplinary work has been an Artforum Must-See. Okka's most recent book is debut poetry collection *ROPE* (Nine Arches Press).

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## *Under Construction: Care with and for communities on and off line*

**Sam Curtis** (he/him) is an artist and curator based in London. For over ten years he has worked closely with underrepresented artists to develop projects and platforms for asking questions about the socio-political contexts we are surviving, that give space to diverse voices and that celebrate creativity from folk experiencing social injustice. Whilst working in the homeless sector, he co-founded and facilitated Seymour Art Collective, a group of artists who have experienced homelessness. He is currently curator at the Bethlem Gallery situated within the Bethlem Royal Hospital and works with artists with lived experience of mental illness.

## *Case Study: Talking Pictures: Every Picture Tells a Story*

**Alison Jones** (she/her) has worked as an artist educator in a variety of educational and community settings, with a diverse range of audiences, for over twenty years. Alison has been Programme Manager for Public and Community Learning at Tate Liverpool since 2011, and has played an integral part in further developing the learning programme. Building upon Tate Liverpool's thirty-years' experience of delivering socially engaged and deeply participatory collaborative practice, she has worked to utilise creative learning to help address health inequalities and promote social justice through art. Alison also co-manages the Tate Exchange programme, a platform that explores new ways of thinking about art, society, the museum and its changing relationship with the public.

**Adi Lerer** (she/her) is an independent curator. Her research interests are in socially engaged art, its methods of collaborations and expanded skill sets, and the role of art institutions as civic institutions. More particularly she is looking at the curator's responsibility towards its constituents and the mediation of information. In 2019 she completed an MA Exhibition Studies at Liverpool John Moores University. She has curated engagement projects for British Red Cross and Tate Liverpool. Recently she developed Zoom art classes for refugees in Liverpool and Manchester. Adi's practice is informed by her background in performance and as project coordinator at the British Council and the National Gallery.

## *Curating Using Social Care Practices: Transforming Curating into an Accessible Practice for Learning Disabled People*

**Jade French** (she/her) is an artist-facilitator, museum professional and academic whose research interests emerge from practical experience of running inclusive and community-led projects in museums and galleries. Based at the University of Leeds in the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, Jade's work broadly examines access and participation within arts and museology. Over the past two years this has focussed on devising applied methods to enable public participation in the curating of exhibitions, collections and artist commissions. Jade has particular expertise in collaborating with learning disabled people within the cultural sector, underpinned by experience in disability advocacy and social care roles. She has practised as an artist-facilitator for over ten years, working with a range of learning disabled artists and inclusive arts organisations, and has supported studios internationally to create programmes, exhibitions, artworks, research and policy.

## The Early Career Curators Group are:

Rebecca Burton, Assistant Curator and Archivist, Harewood House Trust  
Alice Eden, Research Curator and Academic, Leamington Spa Art Gallery and University of Warwick  
Mels Evers, Assistant Curator of Displays, Tate Britain  
James Finch, Assistant Curator, 19<sup>th</sup> Century British Art, Tate Britain  
Becky Gee, Curator of Fine Art, York Art Gallery  
Samantha Howard, Curator of Arts, The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

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Marcus Jack, PhD Researcher, Glasgow School of Art and Curator, Transit Arts

Tessa Kilgarriff, Curator of Collections and Interiors, English Heritage

Jessie Petheram, Assistant Curator, Fine Art, National Museums Liverpool

Helen Record, Curatorial Assistant, Royal Academy of Arts

Emily Riddle, Curator (maternity cover), The Hepworth Wakefield and Freelance Curator

Tor Scott, Collection and Research Assistant, National Galleries of Scotland

Rachel Smith, Independent Curator

Charlotte Thomas, Communications Manager, National Academy for Educational Leadership Wales

*The Early Career Curators Group is funded by and forms part of the programme of the British Art Network, led and supported by Tate and the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, with public funding provided by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.*