

**VIS 3399A CURATORIAL PRACTICE**  
Wednesdays 1:30-4:30 pm  
Location: LKK 208

Instructor: Prof. Huiping Pang  
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Office Hours: Mon 10:00 am-12:00; Wed 10:00 am-12:00  
Department: Dept of Visual Studies, Lingnan University  
Teaching Mode: 3-hour seminar and museum visits  
Recommended Study Year: Year 3 or above

### **Course Description**

This course introduces students to the curatorial world through active collaboration with local museums. We will analyze key issues concerning the changing role of the curator and the diversity of exhibition venues such as museums, libraries, and site-specific contexts in the contemporary world. Case studies will be used to illustrate the roles of curator, conservator, artist, and educator in the projects of exhibition design, interpretation, evaluation, and audience development. Exhibition visits and guest lectures will be arranged to engage art and museum practitioners in dialogue with students through work on site-specific projects.

The course provides students who have already completed one art history course an opportunity to produce a real exhibition in a collection-based setting. In addition to field trips to local museums, the course will take advantage of Chinese art collections at the Fong Sum Wood Library of Lingnan University. Each group of students will design an exhibition plan, conduct research on selected objects, and acquire practical curatorial skills, while producing interpretative and publicity materials for an exhibition in a physical venue. No examination.

### **Aims**

This course explores curatorial studies from historical, theoretical and practical dimensions. Building upon students' prior knowledge of art and museums in Hong Kong and mainland China, it guides them to further explore the role of the curator (collector, researcher, storyteller, trendsetter, social activist, etc.) in various types of museums, from the art gallery to the heritage site, in order to reflect on different models of curatorial practice. It also aims to acquaint students with the skills in collection research and display etiquette, as well as the creative process of selecting and re-arranging objects and information.

### **Learning Outcomes**

On completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Gain an in-depth understanding of curatorship and curatorial practices in their cultural, social, economic and political contexts;
2. Explore important theoretical foundations for the study and practice of curatorship in art, history and science museums, along with historic house museums, heritage sites and private galleries;
3. Understand the multiple roles of curators;

4. Build an understanding of terminologies such as “curation” and “curating” that circulate in the art scene and related fields and influence the work of museum professionals;
5. Reflect critically on the relation between curators and museum publics; and
6. Develop research, writing and communication skills for a variety of curatorial activities.

### Indicative Content

1. Introduction to curatorship
2. Curating disciplinary collections
3. Art-historical research and curatorial methods
4. Curators as researchers, educators and diplomats
5. Remarkable curatorial projects in Hong Kong, Asia and beyond
6. Workshop on handling objects, exhibition furniture and tools
7. Workshop on writing exhibition texts (e.g. object labels, press releases, pamphlets)
8. Understanding and communicating with the audience
9. Curating the traditional and contemporary
10. Visits to museums, art fairs, auction previews and/or private collections, if an appropriate exhibition is available, to encourage students to look at actual objects and to engage in dialogue with collectors, curators and other specialists.

### Teaching Methods

Weekly meetings are organized around a series of three-hour seminars delivered by the course instructor and experienced curator(s) who will speak about current curatorial practices and exhibition management. The seminar provides historical information and raises key issues with reference to visual and written sources from academic references and museum websites. It will also involve small group discussions on the weekly topics, readings, case studies and further images shown in class.

Visits to museums, auction previews and/or private collections will be arranged during class hours and/or weekends in order to deepen students’ understanding of major exhibitions of Asian and Western art in Hong Kong and nearby regions. If appropriate, curators or gallerists will be invited to the class, sharing his/her experience in organizing exhibitions and handling other practical issues in collection and event management.

### Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Methods		
	Class Participation <sup>1</sup>	Oral Presentation <sup>2</sup>	Curatorial Project <sup>3</sup>
1. Gain an in-depth understanding of curatorship and curatorial practices in their cultural, social, economic and political contexts;	X	X	X
2. Explore important theoretical foundations for the study and practice of curatorship in art, history and science museums, along with historic house museums, heritage sites and private galleries;	X		X
3. Understand the multiple roles of curators;	X	X	X
4. Build an understanding of terminologies such as “curation” and “curating” that circulate in the art scene and related fields and influence the work of museum professionals;	X	X	X

5. Reflect critically on the relation between curators and museum publics		X	X
6. Develop research, writing and communication skills for a variety of curatorial activities.		X	X

1. Regular attendance (5%) and active participation (10%) in class is expected and will be merited. Students should also take an active role in workshops and other activities assigned during class that build on the lecture, readings and fieldtrips.
2. A 30-minute Power Point presentation (25%) requires students to present key ideas of course readings and their exhibition plan through an analysis of objects, events and publications. They should offer a critical analysis of different components of at least one exhibition organized by a museum, such as curatorial approaches, public programs and marketing strategies, in order to apply useful ideas and techniques in their group project. Students should adopt an appropriate curatorial approach and demonstrate interpretation and research skills.
3. A curatorial project on a thematic exhibition (60%) will integrate the different learning outcomes of the course. As with the presentation, students will work in groups and devise a main theme and sub-topics for a physical or online exhibition, based on a list of objects selected from the Lingnan collections and/or other sources. The total grade of this project breaks down into three major components: 1) exhibition plan and reflective report (20%); 2) interpretive and publicity material (20%); and the fabrication of the physical/online exhibition (20%).

Students should demonstrate creative curatorial ideas; an in-depth analysis of objects, images, people, events and other issues; evidence of historical and audio-visual sources; a carefully constructed narrative; methods for audience development and exhibition evaluation; and a reflection of the act of curating. The project proposal and report should demonstrate research and writing skills and produce referencing citations for all materials consulted, using the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Illustrations should be placed at the end of your written assignments, followed by a bibliography.

### Assessment

Class Participation	15%
Oral Presentation	25%
Curatorial Project, including	60%
- Exhibition plan and report	20%
- Interpretive and publicity material	20%
- The exhibition	20%

### Selected Readings

- Thompson, John M. A. *Manual of Curatorship: A Guide to Museum Practice*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2012.
- Obrist, Hans Ulrich, and Asad Raza. *Ways of Curating*, New York: Faber and Faber, 2014.
- Lubar, Steven D., *Inside the Lost Museum: Curating, Past and Present*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017.

- Butler, Shelley Ruth, and Erica T. Lehrer. *Curatorial Dreams: Critics Imagine Exhibitions*, Montreal; Kingston; London; Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016.
- Hoffmann, Jens. *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating*, Milan: Mousse Publishing; London: Fiorucci Art Trust, 2013.
- O'Neill, Paul. *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: The MIT Press, 2012.
- Obrist, Hans-Ulrich and Lionel Bovier. *A Brief History of Curating*. Zurich: JRP/Ringier; Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2011.
- Graham, Beryl, and Sarah Cook. *Rethinking Curating: Art after New Media*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010.
- Parry, Ross. *Museums in a Digital Age*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2009.

### **Important Notes**

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk>.