A Companion to Curation
WILEY BLACKWELL COMPANIONS TO ART HISTORY

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A Companion to Curation

Edited by

Brad Buckley and John Conomos

WILEY Blackwell
For Annette Michelson, in memoriam
1922–2018
For Paul Virilio, in memoriam
1932–2018
For Agnès Varda, in memoriam
1928–2019
For Okwui Enwezor, in memoriam
1963–2019
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Blackwell Companions to Art History is a series of edited collections designed to cover the discipline of art history in all its complexity. Each volume is edited by specialists who lead a team of essayists, representing the best of leading scholarship in mapping the state of research within the subfield under review, as well as pointing toward future trends in research.

This Companion to Curation offers a new and insightful consideration of the role of the curator, curating, and the history of curation. Focusing on the last 30 years, this volume explores the many new forms of curatorial practice that have emerged during this time. These practices, which take place both inside and outside of art institutions, are considered in a global context and include contemporary indigenous art, contemporary Chinese art since the 1980s, and the emergence of new curatorial strategies from beyond the Eurocentric art world.

The essays combine the viewpoints of leading artist-curators, curators, scholars, art historians, and theorists in the field of curating with newer voices to provide a genuine global cross-disciplinary dialogue about perspectives and issues related to curating. The volume is divided into four sections: An Overview: The Origin and Provenance of Curating; Movements, Models, People, and Politics; The Curator in a Globalized World; and Beyond the Museum: Curating at the Frontier.

These essays question the legacy of Western thought and culture on contemporary art and curatorship and argue that contemporary curating has different predicates. In this way we see interactions and innovations between art and curating in the contemporary world.

A Companion to Curation is a very welcome and timely addition to the series.

Dana Arnold, 2019
Brad Buckley born in Sydney, is an artist, urbanist, activist, and curator and a Professorial Fellow at Victorian College of the Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, the University of Melbourne. He is also a foundation Fellow at the Centre of Visual Art (CoVA), the University of Melbourne. He was previously Professor of Contemporary Art and Culture at Sydney College of the Arts, the University of Sydney. He was educated at St Martin’s School of Art, London, and the Rhode Island School of Design. He is the editor, with John Conomos, of Republics of Ideas: Republicanism, Culture, Visual Arts (Pluto Press, 2001), Rethinking the Contemporary Art School: The Artist, the PhD, and the Academy (NSCADU Press, 2009), with Andy Dong and Conomos, Ecologies of Invention (SUP, 2013), and with Conomos Erasure: The Spectre of Cultural Memory (Libri Publishing, 2015). His most recent publication, with Conomos, is Who Runs the Artworld: Money, Power and Ethics (Libri Publishing, 2017). Buckley has also developed and chaired, with Conomos, several sessions at the College Art Association, US. He has been a visiting professor and artist at the National College of Art and Design (Ireland), Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University, the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, the University of Tsukuba (Japan), and Parsons School of Design, The New School (US). He is the recipient of the prestigious MoMA PS1 Center for Contemporary Art Fellowship (New York 1990–1991) from the Australia Council for the Arts, an Australian Learning and Teaching Council grant (with Baker), and numerous other awards and research grants.

His work, which has been shown internationally for over 35 years, operates at the intersection of installation, theater, and performance, and investigates questions of cultural control, democracy, freedom, and social responsibility. Buckley’s work has been included in the 3rd International Biennial (Ljubljana, [former] Yugoslavia), My Home is Your Home: The 4th Construction in Process (the Artists’ Museum, Lodz, Poland), Co-Existence: The 5th Construction in Process, (the Artists’ Museum, Mitzpe Ramon, Israel), and the 9th Biennale of Sydney, and in exhibitions at Artspace (Sydney), Australian Centre for Photography (Sydney), Franklin Furnace (New York), the Kunstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin), the MoMA PS 1 Institute for Contemporary Art (New York), the Dalhousie Art Gallery (Halifax), Institute of Modern Art (Brisbane), the Tsukuba Art Gallery (Japan), and Plato’s Cave (New York).
John Conomos is an artist, critic, writer, and curator and Associate Professor and Principal Fellow at Victorian College of the Arts, Faculty of the Fine Arts and Music at the University of Melbourne. Conomos has also recently been appointed as a Fellow of the Centre of Visual Art (CoVA) at the University of Melbourne. Conomos has exhibited extensively both locally and internationally across a variety of media: video art, new media, photo-performance, installations, and radiophonic art. He is a prolific contributor to art, film, and media journals and a frequent keynote speaker and participant at conferences, fora, and seminars.

His video Autumn Song received an award of distinction at Berlin’s Transmediale Festival in 1998. In 2000, Conomos was awarded a New Media Fellowship from the Australia Council for the Arts and in 2004 he was awarded a Global Greek Award (Hellenic Ministry for the Arts and Culture) for his contribution to the visual arts and the Greek diaspora. Conomos is the author of Mutant Media (Artspace/Power Publications, 2008) and in the following year he edited, with Buckley, Rethinking the Contemporary Art School: The Artist, the PhD and the Academy (NSCADU Press, 2009), and in 2013 he was an editor, with Andy Dong and Buckley, of Ecologies of Invention (SUP). He is also the editor, with Buckley, of Erasure: The Spectre of Cultural Memory (Libri Publishing, 2015) and in 2017 of Who Runs the Artworld: Money, Power and Ethics (Libri Publishing).

In 2008, his work was included in Video Logic at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia and in 2009 his video Lake George (After Mark Rothko) was screened at the Tate Modern (London), where he also spoke on his art practice.

In 2013, Conomos exhibited Spiral of Time, which was accompanied by a major publication, at the Australian Centre for Photography in Sydney (ACP). Also in the same year, Conomos exhibited in Etudes for the 21st Century at the Osage Gallery, Hong Kong with leading European media artists Robert Cahen and Kingsley Ng. In 2016, he exhibited a performance video Paging Mr Hitchcock at the Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney. Conomos has also exhibited at Cementa 15 (2015) and Cementa 17 (2017). And with Steven Ball in 2016, Conomos exhibited a multimedia installation, Deep Water Web, at London’s Furtherfield Gallery.

He is currently writing a memoir called Milk Bar.
Notes on Contributors

Thomas J. Berghuis is a curator and art historian, based in Leiden, the Netherlands. His monograph on Performance Art in China was published in 2006 with Timezone 8 in Hong Kong. Berghuis has further published on contemporary art, new media art, experimental art, and curatorial practices in China and Indonesia. Exhibitions curated by Berghuis include Wang Jianwei: Time Temple at the Guggenheim Museum, New York (2014) and Suspended Histories at the Museum van Loon, Amsterdam (2013).

David Carrier is a philosopher who writes art criticism for artcritical.com, Brooklyn Rail, and hyperallergic. He has published books on the art museum, the art gallery, the world art history, the pictures of Sean Scully, the paintings of Nicolas Poussin, and the art criticism of Charles Baudelaire. His most recent books are Aesthetic Theory, Abstract Art, and Lawrence Carroll (Bloomsbury Academic, 2018) and, with Joachim Pissarro, Aesthetics of the Margins/The Margins of Aesthetics: Wild Art Explained (Penn State University Press, 2018).

Juli Carson is Professor of Art at UC Irvine. She is also Philippe Jabre Professor of Art History and Curating at the American University of Beirut, 2018–2019. Her books include: Exile of the Imaginary: Politics, Aesthetics, Love (Generali Foundation, 2007) and The Limits of Representation: Psychoanalysis and Critical Aesthetics (Letra Viva Press, 2011). The Hermeneutic Impulse: Aesthetics of an Untethered Past was published this year by PoLyPen, a subsidiary of b_books Press.

Biljana Ćirić is an independent curator based in Shanghai and Belgrade. She was the co-curator of the 3rd Ural Industrial Biennial for Contemporary Art (Yekaterinburg, 2015), curator-in-residence at the Kadist Art Foundation (Paris, 2015), and a research fellow at Henie Onstad Kunstsentresenter (Høvikodden, 2016). Her most recent project was the Second Assembly, a seminar series related to the exhibition histories of China and Southeast Asia, with a focus on the 1990s, which was hosted by the Rockbund Art Museum in 2018.
Sara Diamond is President of OCAD University, Canada’s, “University of the Imagination.” She holds a PhD in Computing, Information Technology and Engineering. She is an appointee of the Order of Ontario and a recipient of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal for service to Canada. She is the winner of the 2013 GRAND NCE Digital Media Pioneer Award, and Canada’s Leading 150 women. Her research includes data visualization, public art policy, and media histories.

Gregory Galligan is an independent curator and art historian and director/co-founder of the nonprofit research platform THAI ART ARCHIVES™ (f. 2010), in Bangkok. He lectures on global modern and contemporary art histories for the International Program in Design and Architecture (INDA), and cultural management and the history and theory of contemporary curatorial practice for the MA in Cultural Management (MACM) curriculum at Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok).

Alex Gawronski is an artist, writer, gallerist, and academic based in Sydney, Australia. Gawronski frequently focuses on the institutional dynamics that underwrite and determine how we see and consume art. He has founded and directed numerous independent artist spaces, currently KNULP in Sydney. In 2017, he participated in The National: New Australian Art, a survey of mid-career and established artists at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia and Carriageworks, Sydney, Australia.

Adam Geczy is an artist and writer who teaches at the University of Sydney. His Art: Histories, Theories and Exceptions (Berg, 2008) won the Choice Award for best academic title in art in 2009. Having produced over 16 books, recent titles include Artificial Bodies in Fashion and Art (Bloomsbury, 2017) and Transorientalism in Art, Fashion and Film (Bloomsbury, 2019). He is also editor of the JAPPC and ab-Original (both Penn State University Press).

Arnau Gifreu-Castells is a research affiliate at the Open Documentary Lab (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and part of the i-Docs group (University of the West of England). He has published various books and articles in his research area, interactive and transmedia non-fiction, and specifically on interactive documentaries.

Eric Kluitenberg is a theorist, writer, curator, and educator working at the intersection of culture, politics, media, and technology. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the Tactical Media Files, an online documentation platform for Tactical Media. He was a Research Fellow at the Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam, and teaches cultural and media theory at the Art Science Interfaculty in The Hague, the Netherlands. His recent publications include (Im)Mobility (2011) and Acoustic Space #11, Techno-Ecologies (RIXC, 2012).

Maria Lind is a curator, writer, and educator based in Stockholm. She is the director of Tensta konsthall, Stockholm, and the artistic director of the 11th Gwangju Biennale. She was director of the graduate program, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College (2008–2010). Among her recent co-edited publications are *Art and the F Word: Reflections on the Browning of Europe* (Sternberg Press, 2014). She edited *Abstraction* as part of MIT’s and Whitechapel Gallery’s series *Documents on Contemporary Art*.

Sean Lowry is a Melbourne-based artist, writer, curator, and musician. He holds a PhD in Visual Arts from the University of Sydney and is currently Head of Critical and Theoretical Studies at Victorian College of the Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music at the University of Melbourne. Lowry has exhibited extensively nationally and internationally, and his published writing appears in numerous journals and edited volumes. He is also Founder and Executive Director of *Project Anywhere* (www.projectanywhere.net). For more information, please visit www.seanlowry.com.


Gerald McMaster is a curator, artist, author, and professor and is a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Visual Culture and Curatorial Practice at OCAD University, Toronto, Canada. McMaster has curated two international biennales: in 1995 he was Canadian commissioner to the Biennale di Venezia and in 2012 he was artistic co-director, with Catherine de Zegher, of the 18th Biennale of Sydney. In 2018, he was Curator for the Canadian Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2018 (Venice, Italy).

Djon Mundine, OAM, is a member of the Bandjalung people of northern New South Wales, Australia and is a curator, writer, artist, and activist. He has held prominent curatorial positions in national and international institutions. He was the concept artist of the *Aboriginal Memorial* at the National Gallery of Australia in 1988. In 2005–2006 he was Research Professor at the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, Japan. He is currently an independent curator of contemporary Indigenous art.

Melentie Pandilovski is an art theorist, historian, and curator. His research examines the links between art culture and science technology. He was previously director of Video Pool Media Arts Centre, Winnipeg, Canada and is currently Director of the Riddoch Art Gallery, Mount Gambier, Australia. He has curated more than 200 projects in Europe, Australia, and Canada. He is the editor (with Tom Kohut) of *Marshall McLuhan & Vilém Flusser Communication & Aesthetics Theories Revisited* (Video Pool, 2015).

Carole Paul is director of Museum Studies in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her current work concerns the history of museums and collections in the early modern period, especially in Rome. Her various publications include *The First Modern Museums of Art*:
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS


Chris Spring is an artist, writer, and curator (www.chrisspring.co.uk). His research interests include contemporary African art and the machine-manufactured textile traditions of eastern and southern Africa. Exhibitions at the British Museum include A South African Landscape (2010), Social Fabric (2013), and South Africa, Art of a Nation (2016) with John Giblin. His award-winning books include Angaza Afrika: African Art Now (Laurence King, 2008), African Textiles Today (British Museum Press, 2012), and, with John Giblin, South Africa, Art of a Nation (Thames & Hudson, 2016).

Fatoş Üstek is an independent curator and writer based in London. She has recently curated Art Night 2017 in collaboration with Whitechapel Gallery, London; Art Fund Curator at fig-2, ICA Studio, London; and Associate Curator of the 10th Gwangju Biennial, South Korea. She is a member of AICA UK, a founding member of AWITA, Trustee of Art Night, and a member of the advisory board of Block Universe. Recent editorial work includes Fusion of Horizons (Whitechapel/MIT Publishing, 2018) and fig-2: 50 projects in 50 weeks (Black Dog Publishing, 2017), and other publications include Eva Grubinger (Sternberg Press, 2015).

Lee Weng-Choy is an independent art critic and consultant, currently based in Kuala Lumpur. He is president of the Singapore Section of the International Association of Art Critics and writes on contemporary art and culture in Southeast Asia. His essays have appeared in journals such as Afterall, and anthologies such as Modern and Contemporary Southeast Asian Art, Over Here: International Perspectives on Art and Culture, and Theory in Contemporary Art since 1985.

Martha Wilson is a performance artist and founding director of Franklin Furnace Archive, Inc. in New York, US.
The editors sincerely wish to thank the following people for making this book possible. Jayne Fargnoli, Catriona King, Jake Opie, Elisha Benjamin, and Richard Samson of Wiley-Blackwell for their unwavering professionalism and dedication in seeing our manuscript through from its conception to its realization.

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We are, of course, especially grateful to all of our contributors who gave their time and expertise in helping us to materialize our editorial intentions and objectives. Many heartfelt thanks to all of you in sharing our critical interest for the concerns and direction of contemporary curating in our society.

It is hoped that *A Companion to Curation* in its own way contributes to a better conceptual, cultural, and historical understanding of contemporary art discourse and its impact on our individual and public lives.

Brad Buckley and John Conomos
The role of the curator has always evolved, as the definitions and institutions of art have changed. It is not only the role that has transformed, however, but also the expectations of what curators should do, not unlike what is now required of educators (and the roles are becoming more and more intertwined): to be highly productive and mobile; to be a consummate communicator, diplomat, scholar, and maybe fundraiser; to be at the forefront of emerging developments; and to be accessible to broad and diverse audiences. As exhibitions become absorbed into the mass entertainment industry, with institutions compelled to ever extend their visitorship, curators increasingly need to also move beyond the confines of the museum and into the public sphere – both physical and virtual – as facilitators, collaborators, advocates, and entertainers.

While the situation sketched here is by no means universal, it reflects the great diversification of curatorship in the twenty-first century. We can attribute this to numerous factors: new technologies, shifting demographics, globalizing artistic networks, the addressing of racial and gender biases in art history and museums, and the “educational turn” in the making, presentation, and communication of art toward research and knowledge production. Each has challenged the traditional institutions of art, opening them up to new histories and audiences, as well as building new models and alternative systems. Artists and curators, often from outside the dominant power structures and centers of modern art, have challenged how exhibitions are made, putting forth positions that have begun to dismantle what seemed unassailable only a few years ago. If we go back to the communicative role of the curator, it is now starkly evident that a close consideration of who speaks, to whom, and for whom, is fundamentally important to curatorial work.

To understand how these developments have brought us here, a wide-ranging and historically grounded anthology such as this is enormously useful. There have been numerous publications on curating in recent years, many coming out of the proliferating courses and conferences on the subject, as well as the rapidly growing scholarship on exhibition histories. This book adds substantially to the field by
bringing together a number of these research streams, enabling us to connect multiple perspectives and methodologies that have emerged over several centuries in different locations. The chapters here trace the transformation of the curator from a keeper of curiosities in seventeenth-century Europe, to a builder of collections and a maker of exhibitions, to a multifaceted cultural agent in a global, virtual world. Such a long, broad view brings into focus how complex and dynamic the curatorial field is. While deeply informed by history and the responsibilities that carries, it is continually being invigorated and challenged by the conversations taking place between individuals in the present. This publication affirms that in making our way through this vastly expanded arena – where we are often in danger of forgetting or getting lost – it is this willingness to keep the conversation going that is our surest guide.

Russell Storer
Deputy Director (Curatorial & Research)
National Gallery Singapore
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Introduction
Brad Buckley and John Conomos

This book, *A Companion to Curation*, fills a crucial and longstanding need in the literature on the curator, curating, and the history of curation. This comprehensive collection is a clear, engaging, and timely addition to the field.

The main objective, as with all volumes in the various *Blackwell Companion* series, is to provide a reference work for the field of curatorial studies and curating in the visual arts that is at once comprehensive in scope and context, comprehensible to the non-specialist, and representative of the diversity of current approaches within the discipline and profession. One of the key concerns of our book is to discuss how and why curating has become such a central critical and practical concern within the “global contemporary” art world and how it will be imagined and manifested in the future. Essentially, we have examined a number of crucial developments since the late 1980s and early 1990s that have placed curating at the center of our present hyperinflated art system. This situation is characterized, according to Paul O’Neill, Mick Wilson, and Lucy Steeds, by a defining tension between curating as display-making (the exhibition) and curating as an expanded practice (the curatorial) (O’Neill, 2016). Relatedly, as these authors and others have recently observed, the rapid and pervasive changes to curating have been significantly predicated on the huge expansion of curatorial and educational platforms and programs in our tertiary educational and museological sector. This is evident in the contemporary literature on curating, which underscores how the current international focus on educational curating programs has produced problematic understandings and Eurocentric professional practices and perspectives.

*A Companion to Curation* primarily addresses the unprecedented interest in contemporary art curating during the last 30 years and how the curatorial discourse has changed during this period. What new forms of curatorial practice have emerged? Among the changes in the international art world is that the number of curators of various kinds, in and out of the art museum, archive, and other institutional contexts, including those who are embedded, adjunct – and who are also artists (as defined by Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook, 2015) – has exploded. Also, many artists have, in that period, in their practices, focused on international biennales, triennials, and documenta (Green and Gardner, 2016). And since the 1960s, when Harold Szeemann
became the first star curator, in particular with his spectacular *documenta 5* (1972) and biennales suggesting cultural and political change emerged, curators became also essentially fundraisers. This mainly occurred in the latter half of the century.

We emphasize as well, throughout the book, how the emergence of a globalized curatorial discourse since the late 1980s has occurred alongside the biennale culture of the same period. This indicates the contextualization of curating within the biennales and large-scale exhibitions of the last three decades or so, and the rethinking of curating as a medium of artistic practice. In short, this period has seen a radical convergence of art and curatorial practice for the first time. This rapid explosion of biennales, the so-called biennalization of international contemporary art, can be examined in the context of globalized neoliberalism. Critic Peter Schjeldahl once described this as “festivalism,” where art simply reinforced the neocolonial norms and currents of international capital, politics, and power (Green and Gardner 2016: 197–198).

For the influential curator Hans-Ulrich Obrist, biennales, triennales, and large-scale exhibitions, and archives, represent the notion of the exhibition space itself being a laboratory where ideas, knowledge, and cultural forms are articulated and distributed throughout the larger culture (Obrist 2011). This allows, to quote Obrist, “the unexpected, the spontaneous, and the unplanned” to take place in society (Obrist 2011: 177). In such key exhibitions as *Cities on the Move*, curated with Hou Hanru (1990), *Laboratorium*, curated with Barbara Vanderlinden (1999), and *do it* (1993), we encounter Obrist’s distinctively expansive knowledge and strategies. These strategies are based on a collaborative form of curating, treating it as a toolbox, so that curating itself can learn from urbanism, for instance. Curators, for Obrist, are responsible for the critical information that is transmitted between and through the objects of a given exhibition. Here the spectators themselves become the essential decipherers of the objects of an exhibition. Exhibitions should be curated based on understanding and accepting that there is no knowing exactly where they may lead. The classic example of this is the monumental exhibition *Les Immatériaux* that the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard curated in 1985.

Curators had been defined, since the seventeenth century, as people who take care, preserve, and classify objects worth caring for: as the German artist Tino Sehgal reminds us, in a word, “a specialist of things.” Nowadays, in an era of hyperspecialization and globalized technocracy, Obrist stands out as someone who is a generalist in many fields. He speaks with erudition and inventiveness, and is interested in curating as a means of articulating the intersubjective, the dynamic, and of transcending the static of the art world (Obrist 2011: 11). Ironically, in the mid-1990s Obrist was contemplating leaving the art world, but then applied his speculative curatorial objective to locating and cross-fertilizing the elements of an exhibition, treating it as a laboratory of ideas that will impact on society in a much broader context than the art world. He has problematized the very moral authority of the modern-day curator as a specialist who can alone decide on the validity of something. In his quest to redefine the role of the curator as a dynamic, intertextual, transdisciplinary agent in the contemporary info-scape, Obrist’s questioning of the static human–object interaction in the art world has been markedly affected by his belief in what he terms “infinite conversations” as the basis of critical knowledge (Obrist 2016: 9–13, 173–95). Obrist’s long-term concern with fluctuating and transformative exhibition structures and formats is predicated on (a) the recognition that curating is a subject lacking a
valid history, a field where cultural amnesia has played a significant role, and (b) the understanding that oral history is vital to its acceptance as a field in our post-computer era. In fact, what matters to Obrist in terms of curating is this very idea of its capacity to allow disparate elements of our world to connect to each other:

the act of curating, … at its most basic is simply about connecting cultures, bringing their elements into proximity with each other – the task of curating is to make junctions, to allow different elements to touch. You might describe it as the attempted pollination of culture, or a form of map-making that opens new routes through a city, a people or a world. (Obrist 2015: 1)

Tellingly, today the very noun “curator” and verb “curate” have become viral outside the art world, and are used to cover most aspects of our lives. Even the historic New York department store Brooks Brothers now “curates” its latest collection of shirts and the once humble cookbook has now morphed into a collection of “curated” recipes. Even in sport, the cricket pitch is managed by a curator. We now curate playlists, fashion, events, food, film, and rock concerts, all of which clearly suggests that the curator’s practice has bled into all aspects of our culture. The Canadian critic and writer David Blazer deftly dissects the cultural, semiotic, and political dimensions of curating having become a cult thing in his book *Curationism*. He argues that curationism is the fashionable acceleration of the curatorial impulse, since the mid-1990s, into “a dominant way of thinking and being” (Blazer 2014: 2). Blazer’s opening pages describe his encounter with curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev and her explanation of why for *documenta 13* she refused to call her team curators. Instead she referred to them as “agents” and claimed that curationism itself can be explained in terms of our overall sociological alienation, where rather than being perceived as individuals we see ourselves as an anonymous multitude, all becoming the same. Hence one of the basic objectives of *A Companion to Curation* is to demystify the ideological, cultural, historical, and professional aspects of curation’s intricate relationship with late capitalism or post-Fordist society.

Although curating is considered a relatively new profession, it can in fact be traced back to ancient Rome. All of its distinct defining functions, such as preservation, selection, contribution to art history, and creating exhibitions for galleries and museums, are encapsulated in its Latin etymological root, *curare*, meaning “to take care of” (Obrist 2015: 15). These values are reflected in our popular understanding of curating as a direct expression, according to Blazer, of “taste, sensibility and connoisseurship” (Blazer 2014: 2). Essentially, in ancient Rome, curators were actually civil servants whose main responsibility was the caring and overseeing of public works, including the empire’s aqueducts, bathhouses, and sewers (Obrist 2015: 24–25). In medieval times, as Obrist points out, the emphasis shifted to a more metaphysical and religious aspect of human life, as the *curatus* (or curate in English) was a priest concerned with the caring of the souls of a particular parish. Significantly, by the eighteenth century, curators became more concerned with museums and their collections but importantly, as Obrist reminds us, different kinds of caretaking emerged over the centuries (Obrist 2015: 25). What quintessentially matters now is how the contemporary curator still remains connected to the concept of *curare*, in the sense of cultivating, growing, and pruning and trying to help citizens with their shared concerns (Obrist 2015).
One of the fundamental objectives of *A Companion to Curation* is to bring together in one publication, for the first time, leading artist-curators, curators, scholars, art historians, and theorists in the field of curating to consider curating in the context of this broad historical arch, and so to allow a global cross-disciplinary dialogue about perspectives and issues related to curating. Our contributors come from north and south, east and west of the equator, and can speak of new frameworks, angles, concepts, and experiences of contemporary curating. We have therefore included a number of newer voices, as well as established commentators in the field.

Importantly, *A Companion to Curation* discusses the global developments in contemporary indigenous art, the ascendancy of contemporary Chinese art since the 1980s, and the emergence of curators and new curatorial strategies from outside the Eurocentric and Anglosphere art worlds, particularly across Asia. It also focuses on a genealogical critique by tracing the concept of “curating” from its primary context in the northern hemisphere to the southern one, outlining its different meanings, inflections, and issues over the centuries, to the present day.

*A Companion to Curation* is divided into four broad conceptual parts:

Part I: An Overview: The Origin and Provenance of Curating
Part II: Movements, Models, People, and Politics
Part III: Curating in a Globalized World
Part IV: Beyond the Museum: Curating at the Frontier.

### Part I: An Overview: The Origin and Provenance of Curating

This section begins with a focused study of the changing attitudes, tastes, and fashionable interests of a series of curators who directed the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh, United States, in particular the problems and challengers they faced in selecting contemporary artists who represented a particular moment in contemporary art and whether in the selection process it is possible to choose who will endure beyond the exhibition. This section continues with a short chronology of the curator as the role emerged in the Middle Ages, when a curator was a keeper or guardian. It addresses how and why the first collections in the late Renaissance were not so encumbered by morality or dogma. As the name suggests, the “cabinet of curiosities” or *Wunderkammern*, which began to appear in the early seventeenth century, consisted of a random variety of objects and images that reflected the fascination of the collector. What was commissioned and collected followed choices, made by the patron to reflect his or her taste and wealth.

Since then the curator has typically been the custodial mediator between an art collection and its modes of display. This section then explores the way in which the curator, at times, operating outside the established salons and academies, became a force and influence that shaped modernism at the turn of the twentieth century. Interestingly, the artist-curatorial is often misunderstood as only a recent phenomenon in the contemporary art world. However, several of the most significant exhibitions during this period, starting with the Salon des Refusés held in Paris in 1863, were curated by artists as a reaction to their rejection from the Paris Salon and the implications this had for their careers and potential patronage.

With the expansion of art museums in Europe and the United States, the professionalization of the curator quickly followed, with the establishment of courses in
museum studies and curating. Most notable and influential was the course founded at Harvard by Paul J. Sachs in 1921. This section continues by placing in a broader context the professionalization of the curator from the Renaissance to the present and the general acceptance of standard practices by curators and directors of museums.

Importantly, museums historically transformed during the nineteenth century from places of “enlightenment – inspired iconoclasm – into places of a romantic iconophilia” in the twentieth century. Central to this has been Marcel Duchamp’s exhibiting of a urinal in 1917, which significantly altered the exhibition’s basic role in the art world’s symbolic economy. Fundamentally then, twentieth century curatorial discourse, as it was traditionally articulated in the patrician museums of modernism, emanated, as earlier suggested, from its original Latin etymological root curare. Paradoxically then, curating embodies the twin tropes of being iconophilic and iconoclastic at the same time.

David Carrier’s “A Select History of Curating in Pittsburgh: The Recent Story of the Carnegie International” is an engaging critique of the Carnegie International that was first established in Pittsburgh in 1896. It is, therefore, the second oldest international art survey exhibition. Carrier focuses on the Carnegie International from 1979 to the present and discusses the changing styles of curating as manifested in nearly 30 years of exhibition history. He describes in detail the history of the host institution itself, the Carnegie Museum of Art, and the vital relationship it has to Pittsburgh, and in so doing provides us with insight into the roles and ideas of the many curators involved, including John Caldwell and John R. Lane, Mark Francis, Laura Hopman, Lynne Cook, Madeleine Grynszteine, and Richard Armstrong. Carrier acutely delineates the many issues and problems of such a large international exhibition in a provincial city. He discusses the expectations and claims such an international art exhibition can pose to us in the context of the changing contemporary art world. He analyses how these various curators individually contributed to our understanding of contemporary art and, relatedly, how one can identify those artists who will endure in such a turbulent zeitgeist.

Adam Geczy’s chapter, “Curating Curiosity: Imperialism, Materialism, Humanism, and the Wunderkammer” delineates the fundamental genesis of the museum in the context of secular humanism, imperialism, and the very early stages of modern science. Crucially, Geczy illustrates that, despite their actual grounding in scientific enquiry, the earliest museums were essentially collections gathered by individual collectors and thus expressed their tastes, preferences, fantasies, and geographical location. To probe these early collections is, by definition, to also focus on the centrality of the qualities of curiosity and wonder that inform both art and science. Wunderkammer, Kunstkabinett, Schatzkammer, guardaroba, and studiolo are all, Geczy contends, implied in the English “cabinet of curiosities” and are the defining terms of the arrangements, settings, organizational principles, and philosophies that came to be the museum.

Etymologically speaking, the first museums were named after the Greek word musion, signifying “seat of the Muses,” and they were undoubtedly sites of wonder before ideas such as taxonomy and science began to play a role in the development of the museum. Geczy demonstrates that the original museums were not only storehouses of vast riches, but also sites for reflection on our world and the next one, illustrating the vastness and impulses of the world and how the metaphysical was placed in relation to the material. For Geczy, the word Wunderkammer continues to define a