


**INSTITUTION
AS
PRAXIS**



Edited by Carolina Rito and Bill Balaskas

**NEW
CURATORIAL
DIRECTIONS
FOR
COLLABORATIVE
RESEARCH**

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NEW CURATORIAL
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COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

Carolina Rito and Bill Balaskas
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& CULTURE FORUM

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WHAT IS THE CURATORIAL DOING?

Carolina Rito

Museums have long been perceived as sites where knowledge is produced. This is usually attributed to the collections they hold and the expertise they gather around their material and immaterial archives. Research departments and related staff ensure that purchased and donated objects are well conserved, catalogued, and looked after. However, in the last two decades, the epistemic function of museums, or, for the purpose of this text, arts institutions, has been claimed and put into practice from areas themselves far removed from collections and their related activities. In fact, despite using the same term, research, the new modalities of knowledge production in arts organisations, from curatorial to artistic research, deploy different methods and move away from the repetition of inherited epistemologies and fixed methodologies, welcoming seemingly unrelated juxtapositions and provoking new points of entry to the subject matter.

This text articulates the proposition of the “institution as praxis,” and looks at how the current cultural scenario in the UK can still be home for more speculative and experimental approaches to programming and, therefore, research. It looks at programming and the curatorial as spaces for the development of new enquiries, the articulation of new answers, and the advancement of new knowledge. The curatorial is understood here as an area of cultural practice that articulates a critical response to traditional modes of knowledge production, drawing on the legacies of postcolonial studies, gender studies, and post-structuralism. The second part of this text draws on my experience as Head of Public Programmes and Research (PP&R) at Nottingham Contemporary—particularly in discussing the “Institution as Praxis” research strand that

I initiated in 2017.¹ At a time when the epistemic function of curating and the curatorial is shifting, we must urgently revisit the nature and capacities of research in institutions of display. The breadth and diversity of practices taking place deserve the attention of practitioners and, moreover, academics.

The site of research in art institutions, beyond the traditional epistemic functions of the museum, is one focus of this text. What I suggest, and will soon further explore, is that these new forms of knowledge production operate through the institution as a mode of *epistemic praxis*. Visual cultures, the curatorial, and art practices have made themselves available to the exploration of more speculative and affective drivers of knowledge production, beyond the monolithic paradigm of collection-based research described above. Still, the new ecology of practice-based forms of research that is in art institutions—including, and, at times, especially, non-collecting organisations—is hardly recognised by museums, funders, and the academy. Head of Research at Tate, Emily Pringle, in her latest book *Rethinking Research in the Art Museum*, argues that there is a certain resistance in museums and the academy to accept the more practice-based forms of research that are ongoing within these institutions. Pringle provides an example of how:

research on items in the collection appeared to be without controversy, sanctioned as a vital responsibility of curators and academics,

1 — “Research,”
Nottinghamcontemporary.org,
accessed January 23, 2020, [https://
www.nottinghamcontemporary.
org/exchange/research/#public-
programmes-research-strands](https://www.nottinghamcontemporary.org/exchange/research/#public-programmes-research-strands).

recognised by universities and rewarded by academic funders as a core epistemological activity within the organisation, whilst the extensive curatorial research that took place prior to any temporary exhibition or acquisition seemed not to warrant such approbation.²

Collection-related research is widely recognised, fundamentally due to its epistemic similarities with traditional academic research. The privileging of such an insufficient paradigm—which refuses to acknowledge new modalities of knowledge production in arts institutions—limits the potentials of research within, beyond, and at the intersection of the academia and the cultural sector.

In order to look at the epistemic function of cultural organisations and their curatorial and artistic practices, it is worth taking stock of institutions’ current priorities—whether imposed, or self-inflicted. In the last ten years, the UK has been the home of my academic and curatorial activity; therefore, despite strong links to other geographies of practice, my analysis is mainly focused on the phenomena and debates in the British cultural context. Rather than providing a comprehensive description of the cultural landscape, it is more important here to mention a couple of aspects of it that will illustrate the pressure programming is currently under.

The purpose of institutions, their objectives and aims, and their trajectories and lines of programming are to a large extent defined by the funding streams available in the sector. According to Pringle, in the UK context, institutions are mainly engaged in responding to four major discourses.³

2 — Emily Pringle, *Rethinking
Research in the Art Museum*
(New York: Routledge, 2019) xi.

3 — *Ibid.*, 11.

Firstly, the discourse of financial sustainability—finding sources of funding to bridge the gap in state-funding and generating income in-house, e.g., private hire. Secondly, then, is the discourse of democratic participation, which consists of a concern with opening up the institution to broader collaborations—with current audiences and new ones alike—in order to help inform its activities.⁴ Finally, the last two discourses identified by Pringle are intertwined: collection care/expansion and academia. Given that the focus of this text is, mainly, on non-collecting institutions of display or *kunsthallen*, the first two discourses are more relevant here.⁵

The conditions created by the gradual withdrawal of government funding for art institutions and the corporatisation of the sector are dire. In the UK, the pressure to be financially sustainable comes hand in hand with the requirement that institutions attract the maximum number of visitors. Curatorial teams shrink while marketing and development teams flourish, responding to the ever-growing pressure to attract more and new audiences. Cultural institutions are asked to increase their footfall

4 — The democratic participation principle has been instrumental to the growing movement of cultural democracy. In a report commissioned by Arts Council England in September 2018, the term “Cultural Democracy” is described as an “approach to arts and culture that actively engaged everyone in deciding what counts as culture, where it happens, who makes it, and who experiences it. It is not a new concept, but it’s one that seems to be gaining focus across arts and culture.” 64 Million Artists and Arts Council England, “Cultural Democracy in Practice,” September 2018, PDF, <https://64millionartists.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/culturaldemocracy.pdf>.

5 — In “Institutional Mores,” Alex Farquharson uses the term *kunsthalle* to refer to non-collecting and medium sized institutions. As the author indicates, this model is more prevalent in continental Europe and Scandinavia, countries with a stronger socialist culture where cultural centres are part of the development of local communities. Alex Farquharson, “Institutional Mores,” in Pascal Gielen, ed., *Institutional Attitudes: Instituting Art in a Flat World* (Amsterdam: Valiz/Antennae, 2013), 220.

while primary and secondary schools see a consistent disinvestment in cultural education.⁶ These changes have brought challenges to both sectors. Those of us interested in saving our institutions from financial instability and eventual closure may ask, then, how the government could possibly anticipate that these two policies would complement one another? Reducing the provision in cultural education seems to only bring more challenges to the cultural sector, and, moreover, to the development of a more participative and critical society.

TOWARDS A RESEARCH ECOLOGY

Despite the pressures mentioned above, in the context of contemporary art and curatorial practices, new initiatives have emerged where the tools and resources available—human, financial, and/or physical—have been used to operationalise a different approach to programming. For example, in the Netherlands, BAK basis voor actuele kunst programmes around one proposition that, for a few years, becomes the core of the institutions’ activities—setting up the questions and directing the nature of the programme.⁷ Contemporary art institutions such as BAK have demonstrated an increasing interest in research-led programming, promoting longitudinal lines of enquiry, and exploring artistic tools intended to reach beyond the proposed target audience. Instead, they set up

6 — On the subject of disinvestment in cultural education, see the recently published Durham Commission on Creativity and Education report: “The Commission has looked at the role creativity and creative thinking should play in the education of young people. It was set up in response to the strength of opinion across the business, education and public sectors that young people are emerging

into a world in which the skills and knowledge of the current education system will no longer be sufficient.” “Final Report,” *Dur.ac.uk*, accessed January 20, 2020, <https://www.dur.ac.uk/creativitycommission/report/>.

7 — “About,” *Bakonline.org*, accessed January 25, 2020, <https://www.bakonline.org/over-ons/>.

programming questions that then generate an audience-in-the-making. Literature on curatorial research has been published widely and, despite not being ubiquitous, research-oriented programming is very unlikely to surprise audiences of contemporary art institutions today.⁸ Research-led programming could be seen as encouraging institutions to step back from channelling resources towards the neoliberal imperatives of financial sustainability and audience growth. Contemporary art and curatorial practices in institutions can be mobilised to create spaces of enquiry, foster critical thinking, and, concomitantly, contribute to practice-based research.

Let us provisionally call this type of curatorial activity in *kunsthallen* “research-led programming.” Within research-led programming, the event is open to the contingency of the encounter, in stark contrast to the kind of event that is structured directly towards its target audiences and in light of metrics of delivery and achievement. If neoliberal metrics rely upon statistical equivalence (in other words, everything can be compared as long as it can be quantified into a statistic), then the curatorial operates through an erosion of such flattening equivalence.

The open-ended aspects of the curatorial may be mobilised in order to unpack the latent possibilities for programming and research “otherwise”, i.e., beyond the current neoliberal demand for numerical audience growth. As Jean-Paul Martinon argues, the curatorial is:

8 — Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, eds., *Curating Research* (London: Open Editions, 2015); Jean-Paul Martinon, ed., *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013);

Paul O'Neill, Lucy Steeds, and Mick Wilson, eds., *How Institutions Think: Between Contemporary Art and Curatorial Discourse* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017).

An event from which nothing can be gained because, contrary to curating, which is a constitutive activity, the curatorial is a disruptive activity. It disrupts received knowledge: what we understand by art, art history, philosophy, knowledge, cultural heritage, that is all that which constitutes us, including clichés and hang-ups.⁹

The curatorial refuses knowing “in-depth:” instead, it is errant. “In-depth,” here, means gaining access to the core of the subject matter in order to obtain its true value, and suggests both a primordial reading and an impartial approach. Rather, the curatorial as an investigative practice articulates “knowing” as reading “on the surface.” Contrary to its negative connotations, “on the surface” refuses lack of rigour; the surface reminds us of the plane where juxtaposed images, ideas, and concepts relate, and the ground where unexpected articulations may take place in an exhibition and in the expanded field of exposures. Surface *is* the plane of the curatorial—a plane that: enables movement across disciplines; allows seemingly unrelated subjects to meet along their lines of flight; is driven by intellectual and conceptual disquiet; recognises intuition and contingent encounters; and finds new ways of engaging with urgent and current issues and their fugitive affects.

When seen from the perspective of non-collecting institutions of display, research has different epistemic and operative functions, particularly when mobilised from the separate sites of programming and the curatorial. These operative functions entail the capacity to generate a longitudinal temporality (i.e., time frame) within programming,

9 — Martinon, *The Curatorial*, 26.

beyond the pressure to deliver or performance indicators. Avoiding pre-established outputs over cultural enquiry and the constant pressure cultural practitioners are under to deliver more and novel products. Instead, research-driven programming can be operationalised as a way to unfold investigative processes through series of events and the dialogues that they establish around them. The second operative capacity of research-driven programming is how it allows a series of events to activate a research question. By events, here, one can also read: exhibitions, publications, talks, performances, screenings, and workshops. Linked activities can be a method of enquiry, advancing responses to the problematics proposed by each event and leading to the parameters of the research processes. These activities may operate as instantiations of research processes, providing the conditions for contingent encounters amongst a given group of guests and within a given venue, duration, date, and conceptual framework, as well as within other infrastructures of relationality. The events open up a research question to that which is yet to be articulated.

Increasing and diversifying audiences is, undeniably, a priority for all those working in the cultural sector, from those that define policies at a national level to those that design and deliver cultural programming to local audiences. Funding bodies and senior managers request detailed information about outputs, audiences, and outcomes before events take place, especially when what is at stake is an increase in audience figures or an attempt to target a specific audience. This has led many colleagues in the field towards programming for specific audience groups based on socioeconomic background, ethnicity, and age-group. Curators and theorists have raised attention to the problematics in targeting audiences before the event takes

place. Drawing on the work of philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, curator and theorist Irit Rogoff argues that audiences should be considered differently.

The point about coming together in curiosity is that we don't have to come together in identity; the reader of J.-L. Nancy encounters we the migrant or we the culturally displaced or we the sexually dissenting, all of them being one and the same we. So, at this moment in which we are so preoccupied with how to participate, how to take part, in the limited ground that remains open, education signals rich possibilities of coming together and participating in an arena that is not yet signalled.¹⁰

Research-led programming identifies lines of enquiry that address contemporary social, cultural, and political issues, around which an audience-in-the-making emerges. Refusing assumptions about the target audience's expectations and avoiding the fallacy of segmented desires, an audience-in-the-making is generated around shared preoccupations and practices. It is a contingency that cannot be fully anticipated.

Following anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's argument, research should be claimed by all those who feel like they need to know, but do not know yet. Although research is often seen as an exclusive practice that belongs to academia, Appadurai argues that research should not be seen as a segregated practice that takes place away from

10 — Irit Rogoff, "Turning," in *Curating Research*, eds. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2015) 39-40.

reality. In fact, it is counterproductive to think about the cultural and higher education sectors through the freighted cliché of the ivory tower. Negating the integrated role of the cultural and educational sectors makes for a defective and naive understanding of the actual forces that are shaping our present. For Appadurai, research should be perceived as a tool available to all those who want to learn something new.

This argument requires us to recognise that research is a specialised name for a generalised capacity, the capacity to make disciplined inquiries into those things we need to know, but do not know yet.¹¹

Curatorial programming can be repurposed in line with Appadurai's demand for the right to research. It does not need to come from a place of expertise, especially, not in the sense that academia often understands it. Research-led programming is a practice activated wherever a question needs to be asked and an answer is being rehearsed. It has the capacity to explore "all that takes place on the stage set-up, both intentionally and unintentionally, by the curator, and views it as an event of knowledge."¹²

11 — Arjun Appadurai, "The Right to Research," *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 4, no. 2 (July 2006): 167, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767720600750696>.

12 — Jean-Paul Martinon and Irit Rogoff, "Preface," in Martinon, *The Curatorial*, ix.

RESEARCH-LED INSTITUTION

From 2017 to 2019, the Public Programmes and Research (PP&R) Department at Nottingham Contemporary was the venue for an enquiry into the research capacities of the curatorial in institutional programming. As Head of the Department, I initiated a broad experiment into how the institution could operate as a research-led institution, within the expanded field of the curatorial. I inaugurated the research strand "Institution as Praxis," which aimed to identify and advocate for a multiplicity of practices taking place across the cultural sector—practices that not only engage with the quest to deliver cultural activities (e.g., exhibitions, events) but also generate new modes of knowledge production and research in the fields of visual culture, art, and the curatorial. The project acknowledged that universities are not the only sites of knowledge production—a fact that is as unavoidable as it is exciting—and embraced a research-driven ethos as the basis of the programme's enquiries. Drawing on the conditions present in the department, we asked the question: what does research look like from the point of view of curatorial practices and programming in non-collecting institutions?

Throughout its ten-year-long journey, Nottingham Contemporary has been supported by both universities in Nottingham, i.e., Nottingham Trent University and the University of Nottingham. Even before its foundation, the two higher education institutions (HEIs), along with local authorities and Arts Council England, were actively involved in the development of what became the contemporary art centre that we know today. Their early involvement led to the decision to jointly fund the PP&R Department

in the same institution. However, the ways in which this department has come about, its propositions, as well as its contributions to programming across disciplines, departments, and institutions, have not been fully explored in writing to this day. The hows, whos, and whats of the initial agreement between the aforementioned institutions is beyond the scope of this text. Instead, I will focus on the potentials rendered available by this three-way partnership and how the department became home to an experiment in research-led curatorial practices.

In an exceptional fashion, especially when compared to similar—and not so similar—sized organisations, Nottingham Contemporary’s PP&R Department was set apart from the Learning and Exhibitions Departments from the outset. With the three departments in equal parts related and interdependent, the institution’s structure provided an opportunity for the PP&R Department to identify its own remit in addition to the adult learning and exhibition-related activities. Moreover, the three-way partnership between HEIs and the arts organisation also contributed to the department’s unique conditions. Although HEI and cultural sector partnerships exist elsewhere in the country, having two universities involved in the structuring of one of its departments makes Nottingham Contemporary a unique case.¹³ Instead of setting up the programme as a mediator and facilitator between the cultural and the academic sectors, we seized the opportunity to set it up as a unique point of convergence for different but compatible resources (aesthetic, methodological, physical, financial, etc.). It generated a third space of practice in which to

13 — Other HEI and cultural sector partnerships include, but are not limited to: Curator of Public Practice at Tate Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University; Head of Research,

Liverpool Biennial and Liverpool John Moores University; BALTIC Professor and Director of BxNU Research Institute.

explore how innovative, practice-based research methods can help to inform the research qualities of longitudinal curatorial enquiries.

With universities interested in widening the impact of their academic research, I wanted to take the opportunity to ask how this set-up might impact the ways in which research is conducted in collaboration with the cultural sector, e.g., collaborative doctoral programmes, research council funding, and Arts Council England’s research grants. An assessment of the impact of academic research should not only include a calculation of the value of benefits to the industry and the general public but also consider how to learn from advanced practices that are already in operation in the cultural sector. “Institution as Praxis” investigates the ways in which we can propose alternatives to the traditional method of case-study-based research and identify investigative practices in the curatorial, art, and visual cultures.

At Nottingham Contemporary, I had the opportunity to develop a series of research strands based on the principle that artistic and curatorial “events” activate research questions and advance new knowledge and evidence on the subject matter at hand. The research strands are “On Translations,” “Institution as Praxis,” and “Critical Pedagogies.” Additionally, the research strands were designed to explore urgent research questions, identified in collaboration with colleagues and partners, and utilise a research framework that was to be activated via a longitudinal programme of activities. As an umbrella concept, the research strand constituted a constellation of events (public-facing, online, semi-public-facing, and closed-door seminars) that took

place over at least two years and articulated the imperatives of the emerging questions.

In addition to the research strands, the programme was complemented by a series of weekly events, collaborative research projects, doctoral research, and *The Contemporary Journal*. Founded in February 2018, *The Contemporary Journal* is the digital strand of the PP&R Department and hosts interdisciplinary modes of enquiry in the fields of critical theory, artistic research, the curatorial, and visual cultures. Each month, the journal publishes essays, lectures, lecture-performance, and image-essays focused on annually changing themes. To date, I have edited “On Translations” (February 2018–July 2019) and “Critical Pedagogies” (August 2019–July 2020). The contributions to *The Contemporary Journal* help to expand the programme at Nottingham Contemporary into the digital space. *The Journal* is open access and commons-based, with the intention of sharing the knowledge produced therein with a wider audience, beyond the constraints of geography and time.¹⁴

The ethos of the PP&R Department came about as a response to how cultural institutions can mobilise their resources to develop research-led programming in close dialogue with academic research and practitioners. This ethos favours a discursive model in linking institutional practice to the formation of a critical public sphere. At the same time, it advocates for a more collaborative dialogue, wherein cultural partners contribute to the development of research questions and advance methods to further new modes of research. As Appadurai argues, we should be embracing research methods where they are needed and

14 — “About the journal,”
Thecontemporaryjournal.org,
accessed January 17, 2020, [https://
thecontemporaryjournal.org/about](https://thecontemporaryjournal.org/about).

not only where they have been legitimised by bodies of inherited power and knowledge.

With the intention of creating a space for a longitudinal collaborative dialogue at Nottingham Contemporary, in 2019, my colleagues and I launched the study programme CAMPUS. CAMPUS took the centenary of the establishment of the Bauhaus as a prompt to investigate the potential of education beyond modules and timetables, syllabi, and learning outcomes. We identified the current neoliberalisation of formal and informal education in the UK as a topic that speaks to people’s preoccupations—not only those excluded from the system due to the ramping up of students’ fees but also those within it coping with *flexible* contracts. Thinking of the productive space of education as a site for coming together “in curiosity,” CAMPUS was designed to welcome participants from different backgrounds, disciplines, ages, and interest areas—artists, curators, psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, geographers, activists, tutors, performers, and architects. The programme has brought together people who share an interest in collective knowledge production and feel drawn to projects that gather artistic research, and curatorial practices as well as sociopolitical urgencies, part of our complex cultural context.¹⁵

The “educational turn” has been at the core of many debates in the cultural sector and alternative education. Despite the tendency to call educational practices happening in the crossover between the artistic and educational

15 — “CAMPUS Independent
Study Programme,”
Nottinghamcontemporary.org,
accessed January 16, 2020, [https://
www.nottinghamcontemporary.org/
exchange/campus/](https://www.nottinghamcontemporary.org/exchange/campus/).

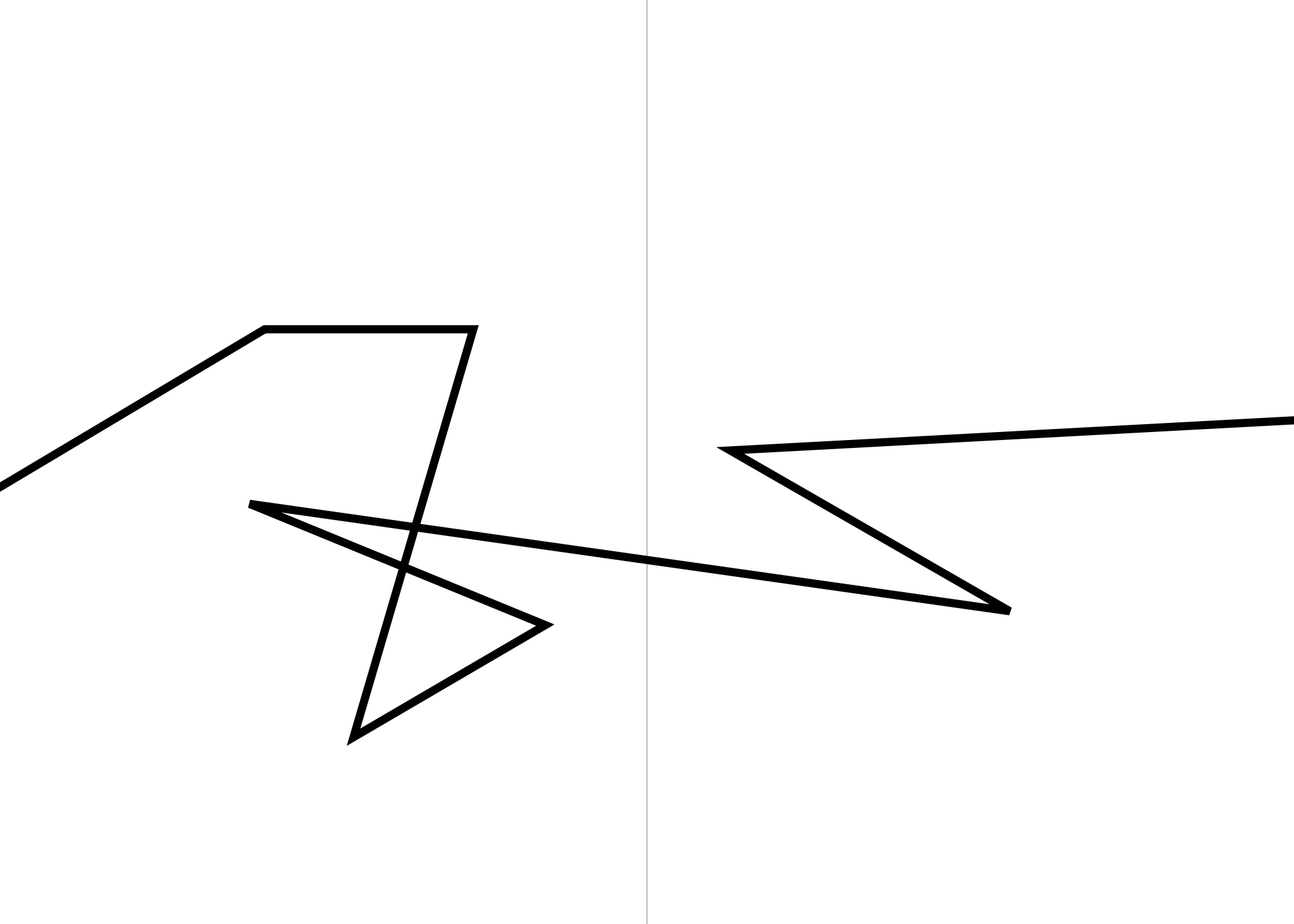
fields “alternative,” CAMPUS is not intended to be an alternative to other forms of education. Unlike alternative education, CAMPUS wants to embrace embeddedness and foster solidarity with colleagues and institutions asking similar questions. To claim to be an “alternative” requires resources to support a solid distinction between *us* and what we envisage ourselves to be against. Instead, today, we need to put our energy towards being in solidarity with, rather than spending our limited resources and time defining what makes us distinct from others. Indeed, such divisiveness and the marketing of the supposedly virtuous positions of “outsideness” are counterproductive. This is especially the case at a moment in time when the educational and cultural spheres are being eroded in the name of profitability and quantification. Furthermore, the term “alternative” appears to be extremely problematic today, used as it is by far-right movements (i.e., the so-called alt-right). Instead, we should aim to recognise the struggles that our colleagues are going through, both within formal education and outside. We want to invite our colleagues to be part of a dialogue and share what emerges from collective thinking and research at CAMPUS.

To conclude, I would like to refer to a text written by the first Director of Nottingham Contemporary, Alex Farquharson, who, when reflecting on the first months of the institution in 2009, wrote:

The consequences of art’s post- or trans-disciplinarity are far-reaching for institutions. In following the lead of artists, institutions can open up public platforms for intellectual exchange of virtually unlimited social reach. By working alongside academics and universities,

art institutions can open up public spheres for intellectual energies otherwise confined to the heterotopia of campuses.¹⁶

Just as in 2009, it is crucial that we maintain spheres within our institutions for “intellectual exchange of virtually unlimited social reach,” no matter how difficult it might seem given the current conditions. With the advanced corporatisation of the sector and ever-growing financial pressure, there is less time and fewer possibilities for experimentation such as that described by Farquharson. Maintaining the autonomy of the PP&R Department at Nottingham Contemporary—and equivalents elsewhere—allows for a space of critical practice at the intersection between cultural practices, audiences-in-the-making, and knowledge production. Here, protocols seem to be less able to constrain the ways in which research is conducted and allow for a virtual audience to assemble. At the same time, research-led programming is a laboratory for practice-based research beyond the pressures of academic performance standards and definitions of “rigour.”



BIOGRAPHIES

Bill Balaskas is an artist, theorist, and educator, whose research is located at the intersection of politics, new media, and contemporary visual culture. He is an Associate Professor and Director of Research, Business and Innovation at the School of Art & Architecture, Kingston University, London. His works have been widely exhibited internationally, in galleries, museums, festivals, and public spaces. He has received awards and grants from: the European Investment Bank (EIB) Institute; Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art (CIHA); Open Society Foundations; European Cultural Foundation; National Sculpture Factory (Ireland); and the Association for Art History (UK), amongst others. He is an Editor of the *Leonardo Electronic Almanac* (LEA), published by MIT Press. His writings have also appeared in edited books and other publications such as: *Journal of Visual Culture*, *Third Text*, and *Revista ARTA*. Originally trained as an economist, he holds a PhD in Critical Writing in Art & Design and an MA in Communication Art & Design from the Royal College of Art.

Leonhard Bartolomeus is a curator, researcher, and passionate teacher. He graduated from the Jakarta Institute of Arts, with a degree in ceramic craft. In 2012, he joined an Art Critics and visual culture Writers' workshop organised by ruangrupa and, later on, he became involved in many more of the collective's programmes and events. From 2013 to 2017, he was actively working as a member of

ruangrupa, publishing books, managing a gallery, undertaking art research, and organising karaoke events, amongst other activities. In 2014, he received a grant from the Japan Foundation to undertake an internship as an Assistant Curator at the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). Aside from his work with ruangrupa, he has also undertaken research and exhibited with different partners, such as Jakarta Arts Council and various NGOs, and he has taught in an art school. Since 2019, he has been a Curator at the Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media (YCAM).

Michael Birchall is Curator of Public Practice at Tate Liverpool and a Senior Lecturer in Exhibition Studies at Liverpool John Moores University. His curatorial practice and research concerns socially engaged art, performance, exhibition histories, and notions of publicness in museums. He has previously held curatorial appointments at: Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff Centre, Alberta; Western Front, Vancouver; and Künstlerhaus, Stuttgart. He has lectured at Zurich University of the Arts and his writing has appeared in: *Frieze*; *ARKEN Bulletin*; *On Curating*; *Modern Painters*; *C Magazine*; *Art & the Public Sphere*; as well as various catalogues and monographs, such as *Collective Good/ Collaborative Efforts* (Stavanger: Rogaland Kunstsenter, 2017). He co-curated "O.K. – The Musical," a socially-engaged long-term work by Christopher Kline at Tate Liverpool in 2017.

Mélanie Bouteloup is Co-founder and the current Director of Bétonsalon – Centre for Art and Research and Villa Vassiliev. Over the last fifteen years, she has curated numerous projects in various forms that anchor research in society on process-based, collaborative, and discursive levels, following different time spans, in cooperation with various local, national, and international organisations. In 2012, Bouteloup was an Associate Curator, alongside Artistic Director Okwui Enwezor, of La Triennale, Paris—an event organised on the initiative of the Ministry of Culture and Communication/ Directorate-General for Artistic Creation (DGCA), the Centre national des arts plastiques (CNAP), and the Palais de Tokyo. In 2014, she was conferred with the French honour, Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters.

Carolina Cerón works and lives in Bogotá, Colombia. She is currently an Assistant Professor in Curating at the Art Department of Universidad de los Andes. She is interested in initiatives on experimental ephemera and alternative sites for curatorial discourse. She also performs—from an eminently self-reflexive position—the task of organising, exposing, interpreting, reading, and writing about art and the metabolisation of other sorts of viscosities. She holds a BFA from the Universidad de los Andes, a postgraduate diploma in exhibition format design from the Elisava School, Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona, and an MA in Culture Industry from Goldsmiths, University of London.

Anthony Downey is Professor of Visual Culture in the Middle East and North Africa, Birmingham City University. He sits on the editorial boards of *Third Text* and *Digital War*, and is affiliated

with several research projects exploring pedagogy, digital cultures, and human rights in the Middle East. Recent and upcoming publications include: *Unbearable States: Digital Media, Cultural Activism and Human Rights* (forthcoming, 2021); *Displacement Activities: Contemporary Art and the Refugee Condition* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2020); *Critique in Practice: Renzo Martens' Episode III (Enjoy Poverty)* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019); *Don't Shrink Me to the Size of a Bullet: The Works of Hiwa K* (London: Koenig Books, 2017); and *Future Imperfect: Contemporary Art Practices and Cultural Institutions in the Middle East* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016). In 2019, he launched a new series of books, *Research/Practice* (Sternberg Press) with individual volumes on the work of Michael Rakowitz, Heba Y. Amin, and Larissa Sansour.

Pujita Guha and **Abhijan Toto** founded and co-direct the Forest Curriculum, which is an itinerant and nomadic platform for "indisciplinary" research and mutual co-learning. It proposes to assemble a located critique of the Anthropocene via the "naturecultures" of Zomia, the forested belt that connects south and southeast Asia. The Forest Curriculum works with artists, researchers, indigenous organisations and thinkers, musicians, and activists. Abhijan Toto is an independent curator and researcher, who has previously worked with the Dhaka Art Summit; Bellas Artes Projects, Manila; and Council, Paris. He is the recipient of the 2019 Lorenzo Bonaldi Award for Art, GAMEc, Bergamo. Pujita Guha is currently a GCLR Fellow at the University of California, Santa Barbara and is widely published on south and southeast Asian cultures and "ecosophical" thought. The Forest

Curriculum organises exhibitions, talks, film programmes, and other public activities in addition to leading and conducting research groups and independent investigations. It also indulges in new forms of research in addition to teaching and developing programmes for academic institutions. The Forest Curriculum collaborates with institutions and organisations in south and southeast Asia and beyond, including: the Arts Network Asia (ANA) for “The Forest As School” Summer Academy programme; SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin; Ghost:2561 art series, Bangkok; SUGAR Contemporary, Toronto; Hanoi DoLab; and IdeasCity, New Museum, New York.

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ruangrupa is a Jakarta-based artists' collective established in 2000. It is a nonprofit organisation that strives to support art within urban and cultural contexts by encouraging artists and individuals from other disciplines—such as social sciences, politics, technology, and media, amongst others—to foster critical views in relation to Indonesian urban contemporary issues. ruangrupa also produces collaborative works in the form of art projects, such as exhibitions, festivals, art labs, workshops, and research, as well as books, magazines, and online journal publications. ruangrupa has been involved in many collaborative and exchange projects, including participating in: Gwangju Biennale, 2002 & 2018; Istanbul Biennial, 2005; Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Brisbane, 2012; Singapore Biennale, 2011; São Paulo Biennial, 2014; Aichi Triennale, Nagoya, 2016; and Cosmopolis #1 Le Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2017. In 2016, ruangrupa curated Sonsbeek 2016's transACTION, Arnhem, Netherlands. ruangrupa is the curator of documenta 15, 2022.

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FOR COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH**

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