

The Curatorial as Pedagogy, On Methodologies and Processes.

Presenting five papers, the intended panel will focus on the multiple and diverse approaches, the History of Art department deploys, to reflect on and reimagine contemporary curatorial practice. Utilising various methodologies, the panel will broach the various entanglements of curatorial thought and its attendant implications for pedagogy. As the department has evolved, its programming and various pedagogical initiatives, have sought to emphasise the interdisciplinarity of the curatorial field. Noting the changing nature of curatorial practice within the present, the panel will reflect on these effects on our diverse degree options in Art History, Curating and Heritage Studies.

As a department, we undertake a dialogical and transversal approach to the critical study of visual and public culture. Expanding the notion of visual arts and heritage practices, our programmes explore modalities that traverse and go beyond the parameters of public history-making, exhibition practice and theory. They aim to develop students who think with and beyond art. They encourage intertextual and intersectional approaches to theory and practice. Thinking of our programs as part laboratory, part residency and part academy, our degrees become platforms from which to think critically about decolonial methods of teaching that stress the importance of learning from multiple sites of knowledge. This conference panel is a substantive exploration of this vision.

Curators who teach: critical notes on the relations between the curatorial and the pedagogical.

Clarissa Diniz

The article crosses reflections on the relationship between the curatorial and the pedagogical. After carrying out a curatorial residency within the scope of the postgraduate course of the Department of History of Art at Witwatersrand University as part of the Arts Research Africa Project, I will bring together experiences during the residency in South Africa and background in Brazil, where I teach curating in academic and liberal contexts.

Like the other lecturers of the mentioned postgraduate course at Wits University, I also work as a curator. In this way, when approaching pedagogy and curatorship, my reflections come from a general question: how can curatorial practice itself act pedagogically? Asking this question, and observing its different answers in relation to the various positionalities and modalities of both teaching and curating, I consider analytically some of the activities of the Department of Art History at Wits and my own pedagogical practice at the School of Visual Arts of the Parque Lage and at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. The article focuses on three intensities and modalities of the relationship between curatorship and pedagogy: "curators who teach", "teaching through the curatorial", "the curatorial as pedagogy".

Although it is not possible to establish rigid differences between these ways of articulating pedagogical and curatorial practices, the article intends to underline their specificities and tensions, pointing out how, in these "models", more prescriptive or collaborative, more normative or disruptive relationships are experienced in different intensities through teaching, learning, and creating together.

Clarissa Diniz (Brazil, 1985) is a curator, writer and art teacher. She holds a MA in art history at UERJ and is PhD candidate in anthropology at UFRJ, she is currently a professor at the School of Visual Arts of Parque Lage. Between 2006 and 2015, she was editor of Tatuí magazine. From 2013 to 2018, she has been curator at Museu de Arte do Rio (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil).

Teaching From The Black Outside: Curatorial Sketches for a Fugacious Territory

Sinethemba Twalo

Thinking with and about the question of the Black Outside - a paradoxical assemblage of incoherent, malleable and contingent forms of being/ doing/ occupying/ inhabiting and/or (dis)continuing – the performative lecture will elaborate on, and attempt to build on its conceptual potentiality. In particular, its implications on processes of pedagogy.

From this position, one broaches the curatorial and educational field as a form of artistic research – as an embodiment of what Christina Sharpe (2015) terms “thinking juxtapositionally”. Not unlike an autoethnographic reflection, the lecture will utilise the Wits Postgraduate curating course as a case study, to put forth a fugacious and/or fluid position concerning pedagogy; the occupation of space; failure as queer possibility, as well as the potentiality of becoming (becoming other, coming over and/ or becoming compromised when the margin of potentiality is finite).

Potentiality from this vantage point is analogised link thinking through a free-form jazz improvisation and/or a sketchy tune in development. Akin to a series of polysemic and indeterminate acts beholden by the spectre of the historical event, the Black Outside Not unlike abandoning the scene of history, is a dexterous utterance of poetically dissonant worlds. Uttering loudly and sometimes phlegmatically, at times mnemonic and referential to worlds unknowable and/or ungraspable through the mere expression of language, its critical stance prioritises the quotidian as a modality to reflect on our present.

Sinethemba Twalo is an Associate Lecturer in the History of Art department, at the Wits School of Arts.. They are a founding member of NGO- NOTHING GETS ORGANISED. Sinethemba was a 2014 Humanities fellow of the Akademie Schloss Solitude. Twalo has contributed and/ or presented work in various platforms including the 10th Berlin Biennale (2018), The 2018 Taktlos Free Jazz festival in Zurich, the 3rd Black History Month Florence (2018), the 32nd Sao Paulo Bienal public programme (2016) and the 8th Jerusalem Show (2016) amongst others. They recently co-curated Interfacing New Heavens (2021), with artists-in-labs (ZHdK), at the Javett Art Center at the University of Pretoria. Sinethemba is a research associate in the Research Chair in Critical Architecture and Urbanism at the University of Pretoria, They are a PhD candidate in Art History at the SARCHI Chair in South African Art and Visual Culture at the University of Johannesburg.

The exhibition as a social intervention: process and uncertainty as pedagogy

Greer Valley

An exhibition often forms part of a process that relies on contact, confrontation, deliberation and negotiation – a willing immersion in processes of creative practice that require acts of deep listening, observation and collaboration. This paper reflects on two curatorial projects presented in a university context, outside of the 'formal' Art History or Visual Culture curriculum, namely: Open Forum, a residency project and exhibition facilitated by myself in 2016, and the OSUN programme, an international, cross-university programme facilitated by the History of Art department in 2022. While Open Forum's participants were primarily undergraduate and post-graduate students from varying academic disciplines, (including law, social sciences, and humanities), the 2022 OSUN cohort were post-graduate students from a range of humanities disciplines at the University of the Witwatersrand. While the Open Forum programme was designed to become a 'safe space' for black students to engage with the national #FeesMustFall student activism at the time (2015 to 2016), the OSUN programme, 'Art and Migration' was organized around a series of encounters with art practitioners and theorists that work on issues of migration, movement and notions of homing and belonging. The OSUN project was presented both in South Africa, and globally, over several weeks and across 3 universities, with the outcome being an exhibition in each context.

Rather than an analysis of the exhibition as an object, the paper proposes to think about the exhibition as process and as a socially engaged intervention. It reflects on how to use the exhibition as an epistemological and pedagogical tool, beyond the confines of the classroom through adopting bell hooks' notion of education as a practice of freedom. The paper draws from interviews with key staff members and participants from both programmes to reflect on lessons learnt in centering the curatorial or exhibition making as a form of pedagogy.

Biography

Greer Valley is a lecturer in History of Art at the Wits School Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, and an independent curator and writer. She is a doctoral candidate in Art Historical Studies at the Michaelis School of Fine Art and a Doctoral Fellow at the Archive and Public Culture Initiative at the University of Cape Town. She currently serves on the Africa South Arts Initiative (ASAI) board and as a member of council and chair of the exhibitions committee of the Kwa-Zulu Natal Society of Arts. In 2019/20 Greer was selected as a Getty Foundation MAHASSA (Modern Art Histories in and Across Africa, South and Southeast Asia) scholar and she formed part of the Dak'art Biennale 2020 selection committee. In 2022, she was a guest curator at the Dak'art Biennial in Dakar where she presented the exhibition, Unsettled. Her current research and practice interests include curatorial interventions in museums and art institutions connected to South African and African colonial histories.

Residencies as a praxis – a few notes on the History of Art residencies

Nontobeko Ntombela

What does it mean to teach curating? What does it mean to undertake this task, in a world, where curatorial practice has become an integral part of activating public events beyond gallery and museum contexts? The Wits History of Art curating course, which has been taught over the past 12 years, has been a space of diverse pedagogical explorations. Wrestling with the complex intersection of practice and theory, the course has deployed various teaching methodologies to make visible, multiple sites of knowledge. These various approaches include the utilisation of Lauren Beukes' book *Zoo City* as a curatorial provocation; the history of June 16, 1976; the use of online platforms as an exhibition space; as well as a response to Nelisiwe Xaba's 2006 work, *They look at me and that's all they think...*, amongst others.

For a period of three years (2018, 2019, 2022), the curating course has been designed around a residency programme. This paper will explore the adaptation of a residency as a teaching methodology. It will attempt to unpack how the 'creative sojourn' of the residency process might allow for multimodal forms of teaching and learning. This initiative began with a residency with artists Hilarie Balu Kuyangiko and Rita Mukebo from the Congo, and most recently, a curatorial residency with Clarissa Diniz from Brazil. I intend to elaborate on how - through an engagement with creative guests - the meeting of many worlds is made possible. How this provocation might propose a classroom that is multi-locational in its intent, leading to the development of sites of dynamic "knowledge networking" (Basu 2015), where creative research can become possible. As Gwen Keogotsitse, a former student of the 2018 cohort, states: "[a] residency represents time bestowed, inasmuch as it constitutes an opportunity to preserve individuality and forge rich, enduring relationships, which may then become manifested in the form of new projects or collaborations that continue for many years" (2018: 34).

By reflecting on the three residency moments, the paper offers a space to engage what Molemo Moiloa terms "practitioning". This sentiment is understood as a moment where one can negotiate a place of practice, that offers an unlearning of the safety net of the academy, whilst developing one's practice (new moments of learning) – the possibility to think of curatorial teaching and learning as a process that occurs both within, and beyond the formal institution.

Nontobeko Ntombela teaches in the Art History Department, Wits School of Arts. Ntombela's research area focuses largely on South African modern and contemporary art with a particular interest in early modern Black women artists. A large part of Ntombela's career has been working as a curator, producing exhibitions across South Africa and abroad.

“Bearing Witness”: Reflections on embodied experiences in Public Culture

Boitumelo Tlhoaele

One of the key components of the Public Culture course which I have been teaching in the last six months is the notion of empirical learning. Students undertaking the course, are expected to attend no less than five excursions. At times these may include other public programmes, outside of the pre-planned course outline, such as film screenings, exhibitions, talks, jazz concerts amongst others. At each moment of these trips, students are given the opportunity to reflect on the excursions by way of written feedback and discussions. It may be argued that these teaching methods are not new and rightfully so, but what does it mean when we seriously consider the idea of witnessing as a fundamental layer to learning and meaning making especially for a course such a Public Culture, in which complex and sometimes contentious concepts such as culture and heritage are explored and interrogated. This in relation to a traumatic South African historical past. How does bearing witness aid for a deeper understanding of not only the course material but how to make sense of the world? Using Pumla Gobodo Madikizela's (2008) explorations of “bearing witnessing” as a starting point, I reflect on some of the course's excursions as moments in which embodied experiences turn into significant points of learning and teaching and ways this creates other possibilities of engaging with sometimes challenging ideas.

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