

WEEK 3: Curatorial Ethics & Practice Aspects

Overview

In the third week of the curatorial course, into the research aspect, curatorial ethics is not a set of fixed rules, but an ongoing, situational practice influenced by power, relationships, labor, politics, and responsibility in every curatorial decision. On the practical level, James Clegg began his discussion from the conceptual origin of the exhibition to the specific skills, covering aspects such as work analysis, target audience, exhibition budget, and required skills.

The Exploring of Curatorial Ethics

Text / Essay	Core Concern	Curatorial Ethics Understood	Role of Curator	Key Contribution	Critical Reflection
Curating with Care (Krasny & Perry, 2023)	Social & ecological care curatorial labour	Relational ethics curating as care maintenance interdependence	Care-giver mediator of relationships long-term respons holder	Reframes curating as ethical labour grounded in care, ecology, affect and social relations	Can "care" become a moralised discourse that masks structural exploitation and unpaid labour?
Curatorial Activism (Reilly, 2018)	Structural inequality in art history and institutions	Responsibility ethics curating as political and corrective action	Activist, advocate rewriter of dominant narratives	Rejects curatorial neutrality asserts ethical obligation to address exclusion and injustice	Risks reducing ethics to political stance or instrumentalising art through identity correction
Ethics of Curating (MengShi Chen, 2021)	Ethical problem of speaking for / about others	Ethics of the Other curating as an ethical relation to alterity	Self-reflexive mediator position-aware interpreter	Centers ethics on positionality, authority, and relational responsibility	Strong philosophically but less attentive to institutional and structural constraints
Curating as Ethics (Martinon, 2020)	De-institutionalisation and expansion of curating	Ethics as ontology curating itself is an ethical act	Ethical decision-maker bearer of responsibility for selection	Radically redefines curating beyond rules or codes into ongoing ethical judgment	Abstraction may weaken attention to concrete political, social, and institutional power
Instituting Feminism (On Curating 52, 2021)	Feminist ethics absorbed and neutralised by institutions	Institutional ethics ethics embedded in structures and labour conditions	Institutional critic and structural reformer	Shifts ethics from exhibition content to organisational practices and working conditions	Feminist ethics risk becoming mainstreamed, depoliticised, or historically performative

Drew by Tianshun Zhao

- Curatorial ethics is non-standard and uncertain.
- In my opinion, this is a non-curator-centered concept.
- When "ethics" becomes the dominant discourse in the

field of curating, is it losing its true critical power over power, institutions and capital?

- This requires emphasizing the positionality of the curator.

The Suppose of Curatorial Practice



Photos by Tianshun Zhao

I plan to research and plan an exhibition project focusing on **contemporary art from Vietnam**. This idea originated from an ECA lecture last semester, where **Vietnamese artist Mai Nguyen-Long** presented his creations that revolve around the history of the Vietnam War and handmade ceramics.



Lam Na's residency at the open studio "After the Great Harmony, Qian Ting Enters Dreams"

VAC Hanoi, from June 13th to July 6th, 2025

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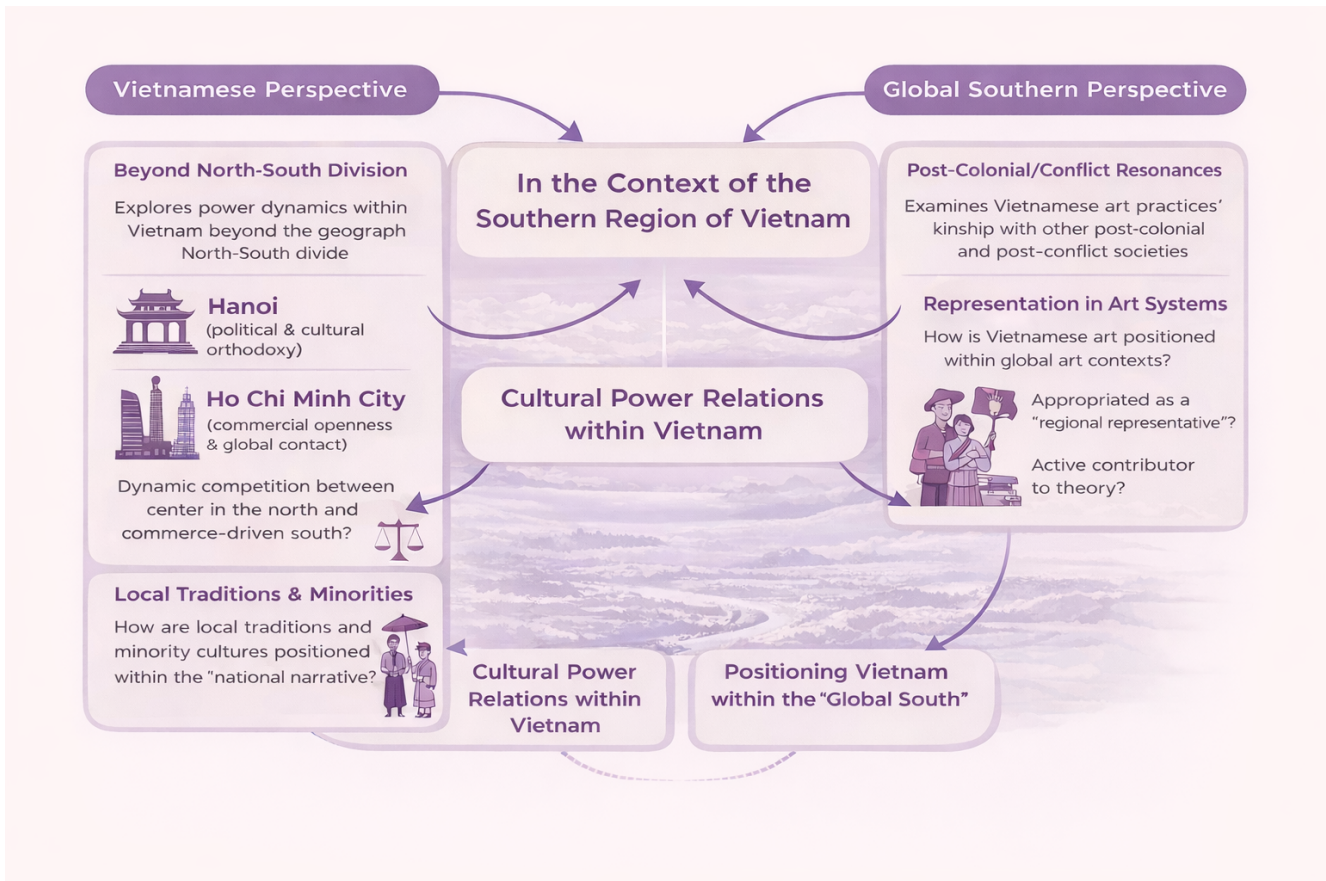


Tang Jianrong (KV Duong) is exhibiting at the Open Studio "Welcome Home"

VAC Hanoi, from September 3rd to 14th, 2025

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In my opinion, Vietnamese art is still in a state of waiting to be discovered at present. The emergence of the **Vietnam Art Collection** has made people start to pay attention to the parallelism of Vietnamese narratives. The **local narratives and those of the overseas dispersed groups** (such as Mai Nguyen-Long) jointly shape the image of Vietnam.



Southernness of Contemporary Vietnam

Image by: Tianshun Zhao

- **Research Path:** The Domestic Southernness and Global Southernness of Vietnamese Art
- **Research Perspective:** Local Narratives and Overseas Dispersed Narratives (Vietnam War, French Colonization)
- Examine the curatorial **presentation methods and narrative frameworks** of Vietnamese art in major international exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale and Documenta.
- Place Vietnamese contemporary art within the **theoretical discourse of post-colonialism and global south**, and investigate its international positioning and agency.

At the same time, from the perspective of the recent hot topic of **southernness**, how are the differences in the representation of contemporary Vietnamese art in the **Global South and the Domestic South**? We all know about Vietnam's north-south issue.

Can it be extended from its domestic southernness to the context of the Global South? This might be what I want to explore in the exhibition.

And given the current state of Vietnamese politics, there has been a shift from a balance between the north and south to a balance among the various institutions. **What impact will this have on cultural tendencies?**