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Vol.4: 'Objects of Reality' – A Show & Tell Session

written by Aobing Wang



This event was Sleepwalkers' last group event at summerhall. The activity plan starts from the objects around you and extends to a discussion about "real" and "fake" (the real and fake of the objects are completely subjective).

I brought a ticket from Linlithgow to Edinburgh and argued in the discussion that it was a "real" item while stating my reasons. First of all, the ticket is an actual entity that I can touch on paper. Secondly, the ticket is printed with the exact time, place, price and some specific conditions, these objective factors are real. The ticket was a proof that I had been to Linlithgow or Edinburgh, that I had boarded the train that day and gone from one place to another. In addition to its physical existence, the ticket is also a silent way of telling the story, in the form of a piece of paper, about the traces it has left in my life, the memory of my travel behind it, which is the "reality" of the memory level given to it by my behavior.



the train ticket

Among the items brought by others, the three glasses in different forms brought by Yubing Hu gave me a new inspiration. These three pairs of glasses are glasses with lenses, frames without lenses, and sunglasses. These three contrasting objects reflect the changing concept of “reality.” We wear glasses when we need a clearer view of the world. We wear sunglasses when we need to hide part of reality; As a decoration, frames can make an individual appear to be a “person wearing glasses.” This corresponds to the correction of reality, the filtering of reality and the camouflage of reality, and also makes me more aware of the diversity of “reality”, which is not only physical existence, but also subject to the influence of function, perception and social identity.

Vol.3: Sound as a Distorter of Reality

written by Aobing Wang

https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/s2658490_curating-2024-2025sem2/wp-content/uploads/sites/11170/2025/03/4.m4a

The third activity is a 5-day continuous activity, we will be divided into two groups of activities, through the form of “recording – playback – recording – playback” to build a multi-level sound superposition formed by the “real sound field”. The central question Sleepwalkers hopes to discuss through this event is “when technology is no longer a limitation, how do we face the reality of being mixed?” .

Each day, one participant in the group would use a recording device to continuously record the sounds around him (including the sounds he made) for one minute, and four participants in addition to the first participant would play the previous participant’s recording at the same time, and repeat the operation for five days to get the final audio.

In this activity, I no longer simply listen to the sound, but participate in the generation and distortion of the sound. The five of us would talk to each other and guess the source of the sound in the audio, and after several days of mixing and recording, the sound in the audio became indistinguishable. The first person’s clear recording of the wind around him as he walked along the road, the sounds of leaves rubbing against each other, and the sounds of cars moving on the road were gradually blurred, mixed with the sounds from the kitchen, the park, and other environments. Even though I was involved in the generation of this audio, I can no longer identify the sounds coming from me. I came to understand the central issue of the event. Can a sound be defined as real when it is superimposed? If so, where does its sense of reality come

from? Take the audio we generated for example. If I think it's real, then maybe it gets its authenticity from the sound of a car horn, or some birds. But I don't think the audio can still be called "real," even though the clips it contains are all real.

We often say that "hearing is false", and the real sound can be sampled, played back, edited and synthesized indefinitely. Is the so-called "auditory memory" sometimes just an individual's highly selective acceptance of the sound of the external environment, and then reconstruction of the heard sound according to the facts that he believes?

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written by Aobing Wang



The theme of Sleepwalkers' second event is The Theater of Reality in Contemporary Art, and we chose the classic film The Truman Show as the main medium of the event. We will think about the question of who is controlling the reality of this

film. This makes me not just watch the film, but with a kind of examination and disassembly eyes, to observe how some of the design and details in the film affect people's perception of "reality". After watching, we divided into two groups for discussion. The task of my group b is to analyze why "we" think the world is real from the perspective of the audience, and to extract a keyword as the theme of observation. After the group discussion, we gathered for a deeper discussion: Is Truman free? Have we ever been in the Truman show? What's the difference between us and Truman now? On the first question, most people think that Truman was not free before, but he may have been free after he escaped the set world. But an objection was raised: Even if he left the studio, he might still enter the next "reality" where everything was set. For the second question, someone shared social media big data that they had trained themselves by repeatedly searching for keywords to prove that their status on social media was actually a "Truman's world." For example, after watching a video about pets, social media algorithms will continue to push similar content, forming a user's preferences as the theme of the information cocoon, so that users mistakenly believe that the world's mainstream wind is what they see. On the third question, we had a heated discussion. Some argue that our current situation has more options than Truman's, but others argue that Truman at least has the option to escape, and that we can only passively accept it, even if we are aware of the existence of the information cocoon.

The key word I wrote for the movie is "scripted life." When life has a script, is the truth in people's eyes just an unexposed lie? The Truman Show made me think about the reality of certain actions and things in everyday life. Truman's life in the behind-the-scenes "world" is similar to that of modern humans: we already live in a "real" world made up of algorithms, consumer symbols, and media narrative lights. We are used to creating a "human set" on social media to construct a nearly perfect self that is different from

reality. This self-symbolic behavior is undoubtedly stepping into the curtain and becoming the initiative of Tulu Men. But the film also conveys a message that reality is not something that exists objectively, but human resistance to false consciousness. When Truman chose to come out of the “blue sky” of falsehood, he proved by his actions that “truth” exists in the questioning of falsehood. In today’s deluge of AI-generated content, maintaining the ability to question fake content could be the real thing.

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Vol.1: Artists Who Make Reality

written by Aobing Wang

First Group Meeting (4 March 2025)



In order to initially define the theme of the collective Curatorial Programme, we unfolded the first short session. Based on the discussion of “Kaleidoscope” and “zoetrope” in the previous class, we decided to further extend the theme on this basis and decide the intention of the exhibition. Due to the limitation of the venue, we decided to collect and vote online again after an agreed time.

My theme is "Who defines' real '?" This theme is an extension of my personal curated project. With the concept of "reality" as the central point of the exhibition, it discusses how people deconstruction and reproduction of reality through visual technology tools from the appearance of kaleidows to the present digital age, and how art as a carrier guides the audience to think about how the definition of "reality" is constantly transferred with the iteration of visual media. The topics raised by other students are also very interesting. For example, Yubing Hu proposed "Shifting Memories: How Is History Edited? . Using "Kaleidoscope" as a metaphor, she hopes to explore how historical narratives change with position, power and time through the exhibition. I think this theme and my theme have similarities and differences, can be used together as the exhibition discussion content. "As you step into this exhibition, you are no longer just a passive observer. You are placed in the position of different narrators, witnessing the same historical event from multiple perspectives. "I think the idea is interesting. Giving the audience a special identity in the exhibition can bring the audience a more immersive audience experience and attract them to actively participate in the exhibition. Puxian Wang's opinion is also worth mentioning. In the exhibition, she plans to let the audience piece together the meaning of the exhibits by peering into different Windows, so as to imply the limitations of the act of "watching" itself, which I think can also constitute an interactive installation.

After voting within the group, my theme was finally selected as the theme of the collective Curatorial Programme. Further framing We decided to discuss further after entering summerhall.

Second Group Meeting (11 March 2025)



While waiting for The other groups to visit summerhall, The Sleepwalker conducted a second group session. The topic of discussion in this session was to select works of art that fit the theme for the collective Curatorial Programme. We first confirmed the main direction of the exhibition, and then according to this direction, we began to search for art and artists, aiming to find at least one work of art in line with the theme. The work I found was Lynn Hershman Leeson's transmedia art *Infinity Engine*. The work's interactive art installation shows the viewer a replica lab with samples of 3D bioprinters, microscopes and genetically modified organisms, while the viewer steps into the installation to listen to recordings of geneticist interviews. Once viewers enter the device's "scanning booth," a computer program inside the device reversed-calculates their genes based on their facial and body features. This work is intended to discuss the controversial nature of DNA programming. Of the works found by others, I was most interested in Ye Din's *mAcHiNe E.L.F.* Author Tony Oursler reveals the process of the gradual mythification of science under the trend of the gradual alienation of the public from academic science through digital cuts and collages and crystal installation, which not only criticizes the mystification of technology, but also recognizes the charm of the unknown world. I think the visuals are very good. Next is *Event Horizon*, found by Shiming Wang. The work is a multi-channel installation that generates high-definition audio and video, in which the image changes when

the viewer stands at different angles. I think the central idea of this work coincides with the theme of our collective Curatorial Programme.

05 Sleep Walkers' discussion and reflection on curation

written by Aobing Wang

Last week's discussion focused on the ethics of curating and the innovation of curatorial forms. In the morning we will focus on Jean-Paul Martinon and Maura Reilly from the pre-class readings. We first exchanged our understanding and feelings about the core points of both. Martinon's views reveal the deeper responsibility of curators as "cultural midwives." When the exhibition space is no longer limited to the "White Cube", but spreads to a wider range of shopping malls, parks and even virtual platforms such as social media, can the ethical issues of curation still rely solely on the norms of art institutions? Reilly's "curatorial activism" infuses a manifesto for curatorial ethics with a program of action: she argues that when 80% of museum collections are still dominated by white, male artists, curators are complicit in "open dialogue." Based on her views, we have a new thinking question in the discussion: What kind of curatorial form can make the cultural subject of the exhibition directly participate in the narrative construction, instead of being "represented" by occupying the right of narrative subject? After active discussion among the team members, we believe that the seemingly opposite perspectives of the two scholars are actually pointing to the ethics of contemporary curatorial work. On the one hand, the openness of flow is on the other hand, the urgency of change is on the other hand. Martinon

uses speculation to structure the “ontological dilemma” of contemporary curatorial ethics. Reilly’s activism directly addresses longstanding structural oppression in the art world.

The afternoon discussion revolved around our “The Sleepwalkers” group’s own curatorial manifesto and expected curatorial form. JL first focuses on some indicative formats of contemporary curatorial exhibitions. During the group discussion, we will first discuss the group’s declaration of curatorial ethics. Since we want every sleepwalker to participate in the group discussion, each person can only contribute one idea. I propose Accessibility & Openness, that is, art should be open to all, and we need to consider multi-sensory and digital accessibility strategies to ensure that exhibitions are friendly and open to people of different abilities, languages and backgrounds. The opinions put forward by other students are also very interesting, such as Genuineness – sincerity and consistency between the works and the curatorial ideas. Although we are sleepwalkers, what we do is sincere and real, maintaining the original intention of artistic expression and maintaining the depth and intention of the works. We then discussed the curatorial forms of interest. Nonlinear Narratives and Multiple Storylines have been proposed, that is, visitors do not need to follow a single set tour order, but form completely different experiences of the exhibition according to their own moving routes. After the discussion we were inspired by a common item called a kaleidoscope. We assume that the exhibition has many entrances and exits, put an installation art in the center of the exhibition that can be reached in all directions, and then set the surrounding path into a similar style of passageway, and the audience can randomly choose a different route to enter. Of course, this scheme is still not perfect enough and needs further discussion and improvement. In the following courses, we will continue to supplement the details to support this scheme.

References

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- Reilly, Maura. *Curatorial Activism: Towards an Ethics of Curating*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2018.