

Week 6: Collective Reflection at Summerhall In Vitro Gallery

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This week our collective met at the In Vitro Gallery in Summerhall for an on-site discussion and spatial observation. During the session, we shared updates on our individual curatorial projects while analyzing the gallery's spatial structure, lighting system, and visitor circulation. Rather than treating the gallery as a neutral container for artworks, we approached it as an active structure that shapes how meaning and value are perceived.



Figure 1. Entrance to the In Vitro Gallery at Summerhall. The gallery sign marks the threshold between the wider institutional space of Summerhall and the exhibition area.

Space as a Structure of Value

While developing my SICP, *Staging Value: How Art Objects Become Valuable*, I initially focused on institutional and economic mechanisms that produce artistic value. However, observing the In Vitro Gallery made me realize that value is also structured spatially.

Brian O'Doherty argues in *Inside the White Cube* that the modern gallery space creates an environment that appears neutral but actually constructs authority and modes of viewing. [1]Lighting, spacing between works, and the organization of movement subtly shape how viewers perceive significance. Similarly, Tony Bennett describes exhibitions as part of the "exhibitionary complex," where display structures organize knowledge and guide public understanding. [2]Exhibitions therefore do not simply present objects; they structure interpretation.

This insight is particularly important for my project. *Staging Value* brings together three artists whose works address different value systems, including economic circulation, material transformation, and production processes. My intention is to place these systems in parallel rather than establish a hierarchy. However, spatial arrangements can unintentionally produce hierarchies through visibility, positioning, or emphasis. The site visit therefore became a form of research into how space might affect the interpretation of value structures.

Collective Discussion and Curatorial Practice

During the collective discussion, when I presented the curatorial framework of *Staging Value*, several peers raised an important concern: the project may involve a certain interpretative threshold. For audiences unfamiliar with art theory, the concept of "value systems" might not be immediately apparent. Without guidance, visitors might simply

encounter three different bodies of work rather than recognize the structural comparison between them.

This feedback prompted me to reconsider how audiences enter the exhibition conceptually. Paul O'Neill notes that curating increasingly operates as a discursive and collaborative form of knowledge production rather than the singular authorship of a curator. [3] In this sense, the collective discussion was not merely informal feedback but an integral part of the curatorial research process.

This also connected to this week's lecture, *Publishing as Practice*, which discussed writing, publication, and textual platforms as part of artistic and curatorial practice. The lecture framed publishing not only as a supporting tool, but as a platform for artistic production, dissemination, and interpretation. It also described the curator as an editor, mediator, and interpreter in the creation of publications and discursive platforms. [4] This helped me think more carefully about the role of text in my own project. The entrance text, reading area, handout, or online supplement should not be treated as secondary explanations added after the exhibition. They can operate as curatorial devices that shape how visitors understand the relationships between artworks.

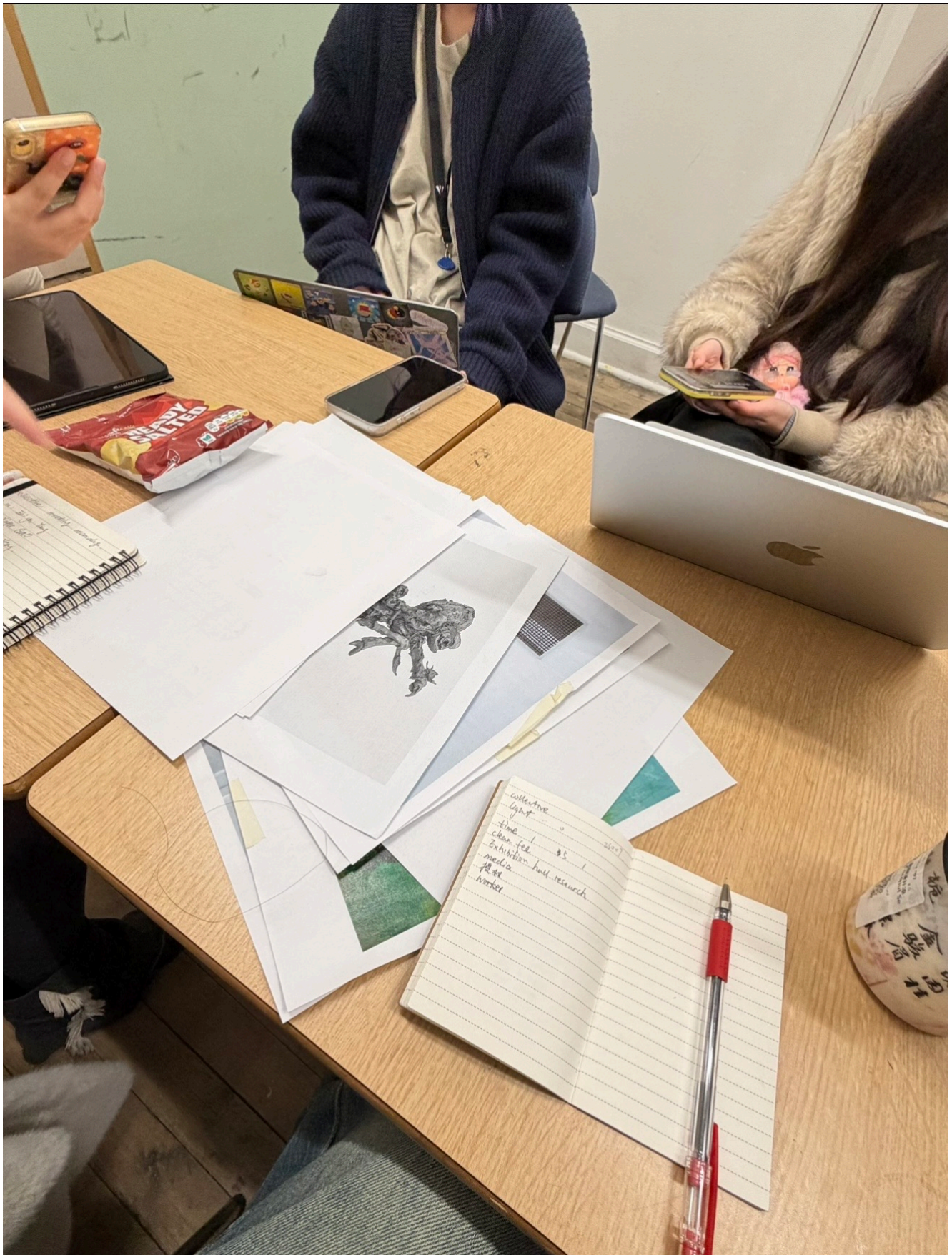


Figure 2. Collective discussion around printed visual materials and notes. This working session allowed members to compare individual curatorial ideas and consider how artworks might operate within a shared spatial framework.

From Conceptual Question to Spatial Strategy

Following this discussion, I began adjusting the exhibition structure. One practical solution is to introduce a concise interpretive text at the entrance that outlines the exhibition's central premise: that the project explores different pathways through which artistic value is constructed. Rather than explaining theory in detail, the text would provide a framework through which visitors can read the exhibition.

Lighting and spatial organization also became important considerations. Instead of using lighting purely for aesthetic emphasis, it can help articulate different contextual environments for each value system while maintaining a balance that avoids suggesting hierarchy between them. Pierre Bourdieu argues that artistic value is not an inherent property of objects but is produced through social relations within the cultural field. [\[5\]](#) If the exhibition aims to reveal this process, the curatorial structure itself must make these mechanisms perceptible.

Through the collective discussion, spatial observation, and this week's focus on publishing as curatorial practice, my project shifted from an abstract theoretical inquiry to a more concrete curatorial strategy concerned with space, text, and audience interpretation. This process demonstrated how curatorial ideas evolve through dialogue, site analysis, and iterative reflection.



Figure 3. On-site spatial observation inside the In Vitro Gallery. Pointing and moving through the space helped test possible positions, sightlines and relationships between artworks.



Figure 4. Collective walkthrough of the gallery space. The visit made clear how circulation, wall placement and lighting conditions could affect the interpretation of an exhibition.

Footnotes

[1] Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

[2] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[3] Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).

[4] Marcus Jack, *Publishing as Practice* (lecture slides, MA Contemporary Art Theory: Curating, University of Edinburgh, 2026).

[5] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).

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