

Week 11 – Collective Display, Material Decisions, and Curatorial Responsibility

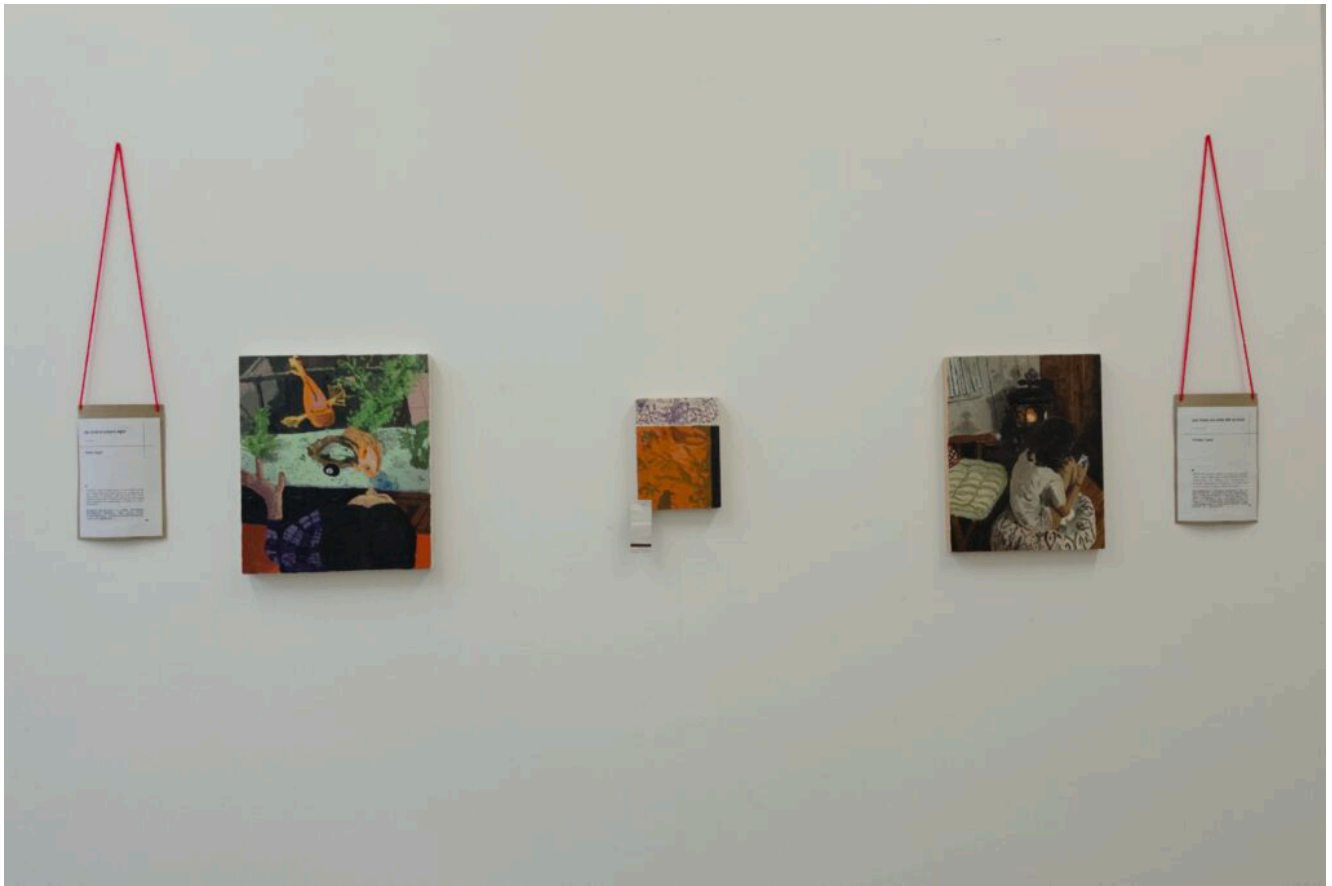
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This week, through reflection on our collective curatorial practice, I gained a great deal of valuable practical experience, which also led me to reconsider the relationship between exhibition concept and exhibition making. During the installation process at Summerhall, I came to understand very directly that exhibition production is never only a matter of choosing a theme and placing works. It also involves using display planning, material selection, and spatial arrangement to realise ideas in a layered and coherent way, and this process inevitably involves problems and compromises.

Our main question was how to create coherence among works that differed greatly in style, size, form, and medium. We tested several display arrangements and repeatedly abandoned earlier plans. Through these discussions, I began to understand that display itself forms part of the curatorial argument. The distance between works, the sequence in which works enter the viewer's field of vision, and the arrangement of different media all directly affect how viewers understand the relationship between individual works and the exhibition theme as a whole.



Installation view of *Our Shell*, showing painting display with suspended labels, Summerhall, Edinburgh, 2026. Photograph by Hazel Ren.



Installation view of *Our Shell*, showing hanging label design in relation to the gallery doorway, Summerhall, Edinburgh, 2026. Photograph by Luosijie Ding.



Installation view of *Our Shell*, showing suspended photographic display with red thread intervention, Summerhall, Edinburgh, 2026. Photograph by Hazel Ren.



Installation view of *Our Shell*, showing garment installation and wall arrangement, Summerhall, Edinburgh, 2026. Photograph by Hazel Ren.

The experience of the collective also made me reflect on my own project. Because the exhibition is distributed across the city, the relation between the sites needs to operate in two ways: first, as an overall structure; second, as something that still has value when a single site is encountered on its own. Whatever order of entry is taken, the overall experience should remain intelligible. I therefore need to pay closer attention to how to design a structure that can still function even when it is experienced unevenly. In this context, curatorial mediation becomes important. If the order of viewing cannot be fully controlled, then the map, site texts, and AR prompts need to take on the task of creating links between parts.

As the project moves from spatial judgement towards actual configuration, I have also become more aware that public-space display is never only a matter of where works are placed. It is also about how they are maintained. The six sites cannot simply be installed once and then assumed to work on their own. Works, boards, QR devices, and feedback points all need to be checked, maintained, and reset during the period of display. Maintenance, therefore, becomes part of curatorial responsibility, because if a public project cannot sustain legibility, accessibility, and basic integrity, then its spatial judgement cannot really stand. The experience of a framed work being damaged during transport in the collective exhibition also confirms this. Curating is never only the visible act of display. It necessarily includes the risk management and responsibility that takes place behind the scenes.

references

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